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The effects of developmental transitions and level of object relations: Implications for marital adjustment

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THE EFFECTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL TRANSITIONS & LEVEL OF OBJECT RELATIONS:

Implications for Marital Adjustment

by

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Abstract

THE EFFECTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL TRANSITIONS & LEVEL OF OBJECT RELATIONS:

Implications for Marital Adjustment

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Janet M. Greenfield

Adviser: Laurence Gould, Ph.D.

While there has been inquiry into adult developmental pathways, the family life cycle, marital satisfaction, and object relations within marriage, the integration of these factors is strikingly absent from the existing literature. This study addressed how maturational forces combine with the individual's internal representational world to impact upon perception of marital satisfaction.

The study examined three variables: the individual's degree of developmental transition, level of object relations, and the subjective perception of marital adjustment. The following hypotheses were tested:

1. Level of object relations will be positively correlated with marital adjustment/satisfaction.

2. Developmental transitions will not be correlated with marital adjustment/satisfaction.

3. There will be an interaction between level of object relations and developmental transitions such that participants with high object relations and low developmental transition scores will manifest the highest adjustment/satisfaction scores, followed in order by those with high object relations and transition scores, those with low object relations and low transition scores, and those with low object relations and high transition scores. All pairwise differences among these groups were predicted to be significant, with the greatest difference occurring between the adjacent groups with the two lowest difference adjustment/satisfaction scores.

Ninety-eight married women between the ages of 27 and 35 participated in the study, 65 with children and 33 without. All completed four paper-and-pencil measures to test the above dimensions.

The data confirmed the first hypothesis, finding moderate positive relationships between the object relations and marital satisfaction measures. The second hypothesis was refuted, as a weak to moderate negative relationship was found between level of developmental transitions and marital adjustment. There were mixed findings regarding the interaction between level of object relations and marital adjustment: an interaction was found when the researcher developed Developmental Concerns Questionnaire was taken as the measure of transition, however no interaction was present when the Family Inventory of Life Events was substituted, suggesting the different domains tapped by the two measures.

The findings suggest the importance of understanding adult experience as far from static and should encourage future research to tease apart the varied, complex aspects of the adult developmental process.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The past several decades have seen a plethora of work of adult development, suggesting the notion that adulthood is not merely a stagnant stretch of time between adolescence and senescence, but rather is a dynamic period posing its own inherent tasks and challenges (e.g. Levinson, et al., 1978; Gould, 1978; Vaillant; 1977.) These have been understood by many theorists to be normative and universal. It has been a theory largely organized around the assumption of chronological age itself as a factor of great importance and as causative in its own right whether narrowly or more broadly defined. Such theorists initially borrowed a great deal from Erikson's (1950) well-known epigenetic model of development.

While such research, with its theoretical foundations, has been groundbreaking in its willingness to conceptualize adulthood in a far more dynamic context than traditional psychoanalytic theory, it has also attracted considerable controversy and criticism. Firstly, others (Rossi, 1980; Neugarten, 1976) have criticized this work, contending that life crises and stresses occur throughout the life cycle and are not so predictably spaced. They countered that life is fraught with many changes, the most stressful of which are those which do not occur in synchrony with society's expectations for their timing. Secondly, tending to be at least implicitly male in its emphasis, this initial adult development work stressed the importance of autonomy, separation, and achievement in its hierarchy of assumed developmental tasks. Men had been its focus. At a minimum, there was considerable debate about whether such schemas could be legitimately generalized to women.

Consequently, a body of literature has followed, much of it drawing upon more feminist assumptions, suggesting that to evaluate and demarcate a woman's adult development on the basis of a male oriented model is a questionable endeavor, particularly since doing so will almost always result in the woman's being judged somehow deficient and immature (Rossi, 1980; Gilligan, 1982). Alternatively, it was suggested that women's development differs significantly from men's in its emphasis on relationships and affiliation with others, while a male model of development typically emphasizes a lifelong individuation process. Such studies of women's

development not only stressed the unfairness of judging women according to a male frame of reference, but also drew attention to how the developmental pathways of men and women may inherently differ.

Another potential conceptual difficulty in this controversy has been the question of whether adult transitions can be viewed as internally generated: that is, whether there exists in chronological age itself some intrinsic maturational force which then propels each person to face certain issues, choices, and conflicts at certain times during the life cycle. This too is a notion that has met with much dispute, since it has been contended that such changes are instead much more closely tied to the stage of one's family (Barnett and Baruch, 1980; Ellicott, 1985.) These stages have been delineated on the basis of ages of one's children on a spectrum ranging from their birth, all the way to their eventual launching from the home (Ryder, et al.; 1971; Solomon 1973; Barnhill and Longo, 1978).

There exists, then, little agreement in the literature as to what the nature of such developmental transitions in adulthood are, how their causative nature can be understood, and how men and women may differ importantly in whatever progression they follow. Of course, all these issues, complicated and theoretically murky as they are, take on particular importance since they attempt to grapple with experiences that affect us all. And just how such developmental pathways get played out between the sexes, despite the inevitable complexity and controversy of posing such a question, is especially significant since the vast majority of adults go through their adulthood in tandem with a partner (albeit perhaps increasingly not the same one for life.) Whatever the nature and impact of these adult changes, they are more often than not played out against a backdrop of another's adult changes. This points up yet an additional question of just what effect the transitions and life events of one individual have upon a marital partner and what implications their juxtaposition may have on each's subjective perception of the quality of the marriage.

Given the relevance of such questions, obvious and glaring omissions in the literature become apparent. While the marriage and family literature is a huge one, remarkably little has focused on the multitude of transitions which arise and the impact of these upon the couple's relationship. These include both the type of transition described by Levinson (e.g., a gradual evolution whereby an individual decides to readjust life priorities and makes

the appropriate changes in order to do so), as well as the more externally imposed life events which will also have an impact (for instance, the death of a parent.) Much of the existing research has also failed to look at those mediating factors which in turn may affect the couple's perception of these events and their relationship.

Those theorists whose understanding of the life course is one based upon a governing chronological notion of development would posit that the ages of the individuals are of significance in determining the nature of the relationship, the suggestion being perhaps that persons travelling along an assumed linear developmental pathway at parallel points might be faced with a much less bumpy course (because of their assumed similarities) than a couple with a more sizeable age difference. However, such an outlook tends to homogenize people to a great extent and does not seem to fully take into account the impact of individual assets and liabilities which each partner must necessarily bring to the relationship.

Existing research tends to focus upon only one of these dimensions at a time, while failing to take a broader and more integrated approach to such questions. As a result, such research only touches peripherally upon relevant issues and questions to be examined here. For instance, while the burgeoning adult development literature has typically looked at the developmental courses of the individual, there has been little more than passing mention of the consequent challenges posed for the individual as a member of a couple. Similarly, the family and marriage literature has typically either looked at the life cycle of the family as a whole, or has taken the more traditionally psychoanalytic stance of examining the individual dynamics of each partner and explaining marital dysfunction in terms of such individual, internal deficits or dynamics which each spouse brings to the relationship. Few, however, have tackled the larger issue of how the character meets the demands of the developmental presses within the context of the couple.

The current study examined how the experience of such adult transitions affect one's perception of marital satisfaction, and further, how varying individual levels of object relations within the couple may serve as a mediating factor. The consideration of the transitions which confront adults (both those externally imposed and internally generated), along with the

quality of object relations of each partner, presents a much needed integration.

An object relations perspective, with its emphasis on the individual's capacity for human relatedness, appears to be a conceptually appropriate viewpoint from which to consider the impact of such transitions upon each partner, and in turn, the capacity of each to cope with such upheavals, which will necessarily color the nature of the relationship. Thus, to the extent that each spouse is capable of weathering these changes without excessive projection of his/her own needs and feelings, and to the degree that each is a more fully individuated person, it is predicted that a greater level of satisfaction will be reported.

This perspective is especially important since what has been missing from the adult development literature has been the thorough consideration of implications for couples; similarly, the gap in the family development literature has been the exclusion of emphasis on the couple as two individuals with differing abilities to maintain relatedness and intimacy to each other. As Nadelson, Polonsky, and Mathews (1984) observe, the charting of marital stages fails to address couples where the individuals may find themselves at differing points in their individual development.

Although extensive research exists on marital satisfaction, the vast majority has tended to examine the impact of one variable at a time. For instance, Burr (1970); Rollins and Feldman (1970), who looked at marital satisfaction over the life course, as it is affected by the ages of one's children. Similarly, there is a huge literature, most of it quite sociologically oriented, on the various dimensions of mate selection, such as need comp[ementarity, age at time of marriage, value consensus, and religion, all as related to marital choice (Bowerman and Day, 1956; Winch, 1955; Burchinal and Chancellor, 1962; Kerchoff and Davis, 1959). But once again, the question of how life events and individual developmental struggles play a role within the relationship and impact upon the couple's perceptions of their satisfaction with the marriage has been largely neglected.

Transitions and life events facing adults have been shown to be stressful, even when the changes are ostensibly wished for or the result of much hard work (Olson, et al., 1983). However, this does not appear to be just a simple linear relationship where the greatest accumulation of events causes stress, which in turn interferes with each partner's perception of marital

satisfaction. Rather, under certain circumstances, high levels of stress may ultimately result in higher levels of satisfaction when the individuals involved are able to successfully handle and resolve the stresses (Fiske Lowenthal and Weiss, 1976; Lavee, et al., 1987).

Such individuals are likely to be the ones with the most highly developed levels of object relations-- in other words, those who possess the most fully developed capacities for secure attachments to their partners and who are not unduly threatened by the upheavals which are ubiquitous to adult life; those who can empathize with their partner's distress without perceiving it as a personal assault challenging the integrity of the relationship. Conversely, in couples whose internal resources are more limited, stressful transitions and life events may not have such an ultimately salubrious effect, since there are fewer available resources to successfully cope with the changes. This perspective is in keeping with those who have approached the study of couples from a more individual, psychoanalytic stance (e.g. Meissner, 1978; Kernberg, 1980; Feldman,1982; Berkowitz, 1984), seeing the self differentiation and autonomy achieved by each partner as central in determining the quality and nature of the marriage. Conversely, to the degree that one or both partners may be burdened with unresolved developmental conflicts which are then inevitably carried into the marital relationship, tensions and difficulties will surely arise.

It is necessary to point out here, however, that such questions are necessarily large and complex. It is not the aim of this study to determine all the existing factors which may influence marital satisfaction; rather, its intention is to ask how the specific variables of adult transitions and life events and the couple's level of object relations may affect marital satisfaction.

Furthermore, since the examination of both men's and women's developmental pathways would present an enormous undertaking, the present study focused solely upon women's perceptions of these changes and their impact. While this limitation my be necessarily arbitrary, a more exhaustive inquiry was beyond the scope of this research.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Adult Development

An adult development framework suggests differences from a more traditionally psychoanalytic stance, where adulthood can be cast in a never-ending recapitulation of the past. Those to first focus upon adult development as their area of study disputed adulthood as being merely situationally determined-- that is, they rejected the notion that although changes may occur as the result of significant events or situations, but where there are no normative phases.

Of course, Erikson's (1950) work has been instrumental in leading the way for the in depth study of adults. This is the first place where the notion of adult development appears in the literature, consisting of life cycle stages after adolescence. Here he described his now famous eight stage epigenetic progression of ego development, each of which he postulated has a crucial issue which must be dealt with sufficiently before the individual can then move on to tackle the next. These stages were conceptualized in terms of struggles between polarities with which the individual must grapple during chronologically determined times, such as identity versus role diffusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and ego integrity versus despair.

Models of Male Development

Indeed, Erikson's work laid down the groundwork for the rash of adult development that was to follow in the '70's. Among them, Gould (1978, 1980) presents a developmental view of adulthood that is compatible with a psychoanalytic view. As Fitzpatrick and Friedman (1983) point out in their review, Gould's view is that adult consciousness is formed by gradual understanding and going beyond childhood consciousness that invades and retards adult psychological development. Childhood issues and assumptions are seen as constant intrusions into adult consciousness and may impede the

course of adult development. Despite this ongoing influence of childhood upon the adult, each age brings a different posture towards life as the transformational process centers around the progressive abandonment of faulty childhood assumptions. It is the illusion of absolute safety that gradually comes to be given up by the adult during successive stages. To the extent that misbeliefs are not given up, serious choices may be made on the basis of unconscious wishes to be rescued. The paradox that Gould points out is that the more "special" the relationship, the more likely it is to be pervasively tinged by such false assumptions.

George Vaillant's (1977) longitudinal study of Harvard students found that all these men had the potential to pass through the basic stages which Erikson outlined, as well as an additional stage, which Vaillant labeled "career consolidation". During this period, men followed the rules in an ambitious fashion in order to promote their careers and cast aside mentor figures who helped them along the way. He found that those able to deal successfully with intimacy were also able to deal with their careers effectively, which in turn lead to the achievement of both generativity and integrity. Vaillant's analysis focuses upon the dynamics of psychological adaptation during adulthood and explains why the 95 men in the sample progressed from stage to stage.

Here Fitzpatrick and Friedman observe Vaillant's insistence that men move from stage to stage for reasons more fundamental than their increased psychological capacity to transcend personal childhood dilemmas (p. 405). Instead, Vaillant claims that a man's ability to get past the pull of childhood and other psychological regressions mirrors the more mature ego defenses he has acquired. This, then, is the governing factor behind adult development for Vaillant. He cites the single most significant indicator of maturation as "the man's capacity to remain happily married over time", which underscores his ability to live intimately and commit himself to others and represents a visible measure of ego strength (p.320).

It is important to keep in mind that the above developmental models are not governed strictly by chronological age as their determining factor, since it is assumed that some people will travel through the stages more quickly than others, and others may become arrested at one stage and never progress further. Development is seen as resting upon events which precipitate growth. (Schlossberg, 1984, p.7)

Levinson, et al. (1977, 1978) have done seminal work in their study of the adult development of 40 men. The developmental process is understood to hinge upon the building of an individual life structure which changes according to an alternation of stable and transitional periods. Such "developmental tasks" are the normative steps taken to evolve a satisfactory life structure, which has two important aspects: its viability in society and its suitability for the self. During stable periods the person is seen as creating this life structure and is trying to add to his life within it. Transitional periods are then spent undoing or altering that prior structure and creating the foundation for a new one. Stable periods are seen as lasting for 6-7 years, while transitional periods typically last 4-5 years.

According to Levinson's schema, the basic components of the life structure remain the same over time: work, family, friendships, political and community life, as well as immediate and long term goals are always present. However, these components are viewed in terms of their centrality and integration within a given life structure-- that is, goals with high priorities will shift over time, as will the integration or "fit" of all the components with each other.

Furthermore, Levinson posits a predictable developmental sequence of stages through which a man will pass. In the Early Adult Transition (17-22), early adulthood is initiated while the era of childhood has come to an end.

During the next period, Building the First Adult Life Structure (22-28), the individual has entered the adult world. Tasks revolve around the formation of career and love relationships which may be more enduring than they have been previously. It was during this period that many of the men in Levinson's study made marital decisions.

During the Age Thirty Transition (28-33), the initial life structure is called into question or modified, a process which may stimulate a crisis when that first life structure is determined to be unsatisfactory and much effort is invested in changing it. As this transition nears the sense if life's flexibility gives way to a less provisional approach as options become more restrictive.

Ages 33-40 comprise the Building a Second Life Structure for Culmination of Early Adulthood, a stable period in which two subphases fall: Settling Down, and Becoming Ones Own Man (given the acronym BOOM). During Settling Down, the choices previously made are now seen as more "for real" and two main tasks take on great importance: the establishment of

a niche in society and working towards advancement. There is a need here to maintain a stable structure and a preference for dealing with problems by making accommodations within the existing framework rather than attempting major structural changes. However, if the life structure which has been created in the early thirties is found to be lacking, then a crisis may be precipitated in the BOOM period (36-40) when that structure can no longer be tolerated.

Tasks of the Mid-Life Transition (40-45) center around the questioning of the current life structure, the termination of early adulthood, and the creation of a basis for entering middle adulthood. It is during this period that various polarities such as young/old, masculine/feminine, destructiveness/ creativity, and attachment/separateness are confronted.

Finally, Levinson's research ends with Building an Initial Life Structure for Middle Adulthood (45-50), where he also hypothesizes an alternation of transitional and stable periods.

Women's Development

After the consideration of the groundbreaking work cited above, it becomes an integral task to ask just how a woman's life cycle may diverge from and overlap with a man's, since this will surely have implications for their lives together. While there are certainly countless other intervening variables affecting the quality of the relationship, the examination of these developmental imperatives, how they may differ between the sexes, and in what chronological sequence they are played out comprises an interesting perspective from which adult development can be viewed.

Reinke, et al. (1985) observe the gaps in the existing adult development literature as is relevant to women's lives. They cite the predominant focus upon men, methodological weakness, and a narrowness in perspective among these-- for instance, the tendency to cast development either in terms of a chronological framework or in terms of the family life cycle.

While the building of a life structure seems to be central in early adulthood for both men and women, Taylor (1981a, 1981b) points out that this structure is more likely to be complex for women. This initial life structure tends to be comprised of more than one major component and may require considerable conscious effort to integrate them. When such a complex

structure is not present, there instead is a rather clear dichotomy between the career-centered woman and the family-oriented woman. Such striking discrepancies are seldom present among men since during early adulthood considerable attention is usually devoted to work and career as the major building blocks of emerging identity. Taylor goes on to point out that motivational shifts may occur quite dramatically in women so that a woman whose major focus during her twenties has been towards independence and career may find that during her thirties marriage and family become equally, if not more important than career.

Taylor (1981b) also attempted to determine whether the sequence and content of transitional and stable periods was comparable for women to Levinson's schema for men. With this question in mind, she examined the early life structures of seven women throughout the four periods of early adulthood which Levinson postulated in men before midlife: The Early Adult Transition, Entering the Adult World, the Age Thirty Transition, and Settling Down. Criteria for the presence of both transitional and stable periods followed Levinson's-- transitional periods were defined as those where the woman showed a focal concern with issues of terminating the existing life structure and preparing to initiate another, while stable periods were defined as those where the woman's main concerns centered upon building person-world relationships constituting a life structure until the next transition, despite antithetical wishes to explore or advance in the adult world.

Taylor's results, though admittedly restricted to a very small sample, appear to have some interesting implications for how women's development may parallel, as well as depart from the course of male development. For the most part, the women seemed to follow Levinson's progression although sometimes the changes were negotiated in a more gradual manner and not all the components of a particular period were present at one time. She concludes:

> Such patterns confirm speculation that concern with separation might be less pronounced for many women-- especially those whose initial focus would be on marriage/family-- than it was for Levinson's men during the Early Adult Transition... While subjects did prepare themselves to enter the adult world, this preparation involved less searching through various options for the future than was the case for Levinson's subjects

> and was often characterized by the simple continuation of choices made earlier in adolescence. (1981b, p.115)

Taylor's research stimulates some relevant questions. When a woman undertakes a major shift in priorities, one that seems related to a developmental pull, how might this affect her relationship with her husband, particularly if his own developmental forces lead in another direction? How does the decision to overhaul one's existing life structure affect one's partner? This last question is further influenced by whether both partners are each in the process of such a re-evaluation, or if one is actively seeking change while the other is instead in a stable period. Each scenario appears to have implications for the maintenance of the relationship.

Like Taylor, Webb et al. (1983) found that women actively seek to create a balance between love and work aspects of their lives and that a shift in emphasis typically occurred between the ages of 28 and 33. Usually there was greater difficulty integrating work and career aspects into the already existing self image.

Reinke (1985) also looked at the role played by chronological age in the adult lives of women, questioning whether certain psychosocial changes were more likely to cluster around certain ages than others. Her findings indicate that these transitions were not uniformly distributed by age-- that is, although significant transitions occurred throughout the life cycle, they were more likely to occur at some ages. Between the ages of 27-30, 78% of the sample underwent a major shift in priorities, accompanied by heightened self-assessment and self-examination. The beginning phase of the transition were characterized by increased personal disruption; the waning years of the transition, in contrast, were typified by a sense of well-being and closure. It is interesting to note that separations and divorces were more likely to occur among the transitional group of women, suggesting that such changes place added stress on the marital relationship, ones which under certain circumstances cannot be endured.

In considering the differences between male and female development, Gilligan (1982) points out that models based on male development, such as Levinson's, emphasize the importance of separation and individuation as ongoing tasks in adulthood. The significance of attachment or relational factors is minimized in comparison:

> Thus there seems to be a line of development missing from the current depictions of adult development, a failure to describe the progression of relationships toward a maturity of interdependence. Though the truth of separation is recognized in most developmental texts, the reality of continuing connection is lost or relegated to the background where figures of women appear. In this way, the emerging conception of adult development casts a familiar shadow on women's lives, pointing again toward the incompleteness of their separation, depicting them as mired in relationships. (pp.155-156)

To the extent one speaks of women in the context of a male developmental model, there is a risk of seeing women as somehow deficient. Gilligan attributes such gender differences to the fact that while the male child's developmental work lies in a separation from the primary caretaker (usually the mother), for the little girl, the task instead is to identify with the mother. Thus, resolving the Oedipal complex involves very different tasks for the boy and the girl. For women, anxiety is mainly associated with separation because the primary identification must be maintained with the mother, a separation implying the loss of femininity. For the boy, however, the essential thread of development is the opposite, since if he does not successfully separate from his mother he is then faced with the threat of merging, impeding his flourishing maleness.

As Gilligan repeatedly stresses, women's identity is inseparably bound up with relationships and morality arises from this same sense of connectedness with and care for others. Men, in contrast, have a clearer and more distinct sense of their own identity, one which is much more related to their own individual achievement. Men do not define themselves in the context of relationships, leading Gilligan to conclude that male identity is defined by separation, while female identity is defined by connection. This is a divergence which gradually narrows as both sexes gain a greater understanding of both points of view. This convergence comes with maturity and is a part of the developmental work of adulthood. While women must progressively work through fears of separation, men must progressively work through fears of intimacy.

In her review of the literature on women's adult development, Giele (1982) outlines some of the differences she sees between men and women. The common thread she cites as running through this literature on women's

development has to do with their sensitivity to others and their resulting vulnerability to loss. In terms of family and employment responsibilities, it is not surprising that while men tend to experience some continuity, women are more likely to undergo a greater variety of timing sequences insofar as having children, or returning to work or school, or stopping these are concerned.

Baruch and Barnett (1979) question the assumption of viewing chronological age as the main variable for understanding and organizing the events in the female life cycle. They point out the possibility that major variations in the lives of women, such as whether or not they are married, have paid jobs, or have children might result in great variations in the patterns of their lives. External factors such as the prevailing social and economic forces must be considered in the explanation of their finding of increased self esteem in middle aged women. Interestingly, however, most of the women themselves in this sample did not attribute their own positive changes to such external conditions as the women's movement, but rather to their own chronological age. The suggestion here is that chronological age itself may be phenomenologically experienced as an important causative factor.

In examining the timing of psychosocial changes in women's lives, Hancock (1985) asks which changes may be ascribed to chronological age and which must be attributed to life experience. She asserts that in the development of women, relationships exert a far more powerful influence than does chronological age and once again underscores the differences between male and female adult development. After in-depth interviews with 20 women, she observes:

> Studying the developmental shifts these women experienced during their 20's, 30's, and 40's reveals a consistent sequence with particular features. This sequence began with a serious threat to an important bond, a threat that exposed and challenged women's assumptions. These assumptions, initially unconscious, revolved around the continuity of relationships. Women became conscious of them only when their attachments were jeopardized, and the scaffolding upon which they had built their lives collapsed. (p.277)

Life Events & Strains

It is, in fact, upon the issue of the role of chronological age and its importance that much of the controversy in this quickly growing body of literature falls. In her analysis, Rossi (1980), carefully draws the distinction between differing models of adult development and extracts the underlying implications of each. First, she conceptually distinguishes between the terms life "life span" (used primarily by developmental psychologists), and "life course" (used primarily by sociologists). While life course research focuses on social patterns, timing, duration, spacing, and order of life events, life span researchers have been more interested in individual development and variables calling for the firsthand measurement of living subjects rather than historical records (pp. 7-8).

According to Rossi, life span theories may further be broken down into another two categories: the normative-crisis model and the timing-of-events model. The former grew out of work on child development and assumes that each developmental task has its "time of special ascendancy". In this model, if a task appropriate to a given stage is not resolved, the assumption holds that all further development in subsequent phases will suffer. Levinson's work falls into this category. In the timing-of-events model, however, adult development is not seen as organized around crises, but rather in the sense of the "average expectable life cycle". Here, stress is thought to result from the asynchrony of events-- in other words, from the unanticipated, representing the traumatic event. Thus, chronological age itself is not a very meaningful variable in this model.

In her review of existing research, Schlossberg (1984) also characterizes theoretical perspectives based upon life events and transitions, where these are seen as being more significant than chronological age in explaining the nature and meaning of an individual's life course. Among these, she cites Lowenthal, Thurnher, and Chiriboga (1975), whose longitudinal study looked at four groups of men and women, each of whom were facing a major transition: graduating high school seniors, newlyweds, middle-aged parents, and preretirement couples. Each of these four groups were found to differ considerably along a number of dimensions, such as their general outlook on life, the stresses they faced, and how such stresses were dealt with, leading the researchers to conclude that chronological age per se is less important than

the specific events which a person faces, such as the birth of a child, divorce, or retirement.

Pearlin (1980), takes a similar point of view in his study of life strains and psychological distress among adults, where he observes that such distress is the central element in life changes. He emphasizes that development should not be seen as a single course universally followed by everyone, but rather that:

> There are many events and circumstances, then, that do not by themselves move people along a particular course of emotional change or development; instead, the consequences of these circumstances are given meaning by the context or situation in which people are embedded at the time... Development should not be construed as a single course universally followed by all people. (p. 176)

Inherent in Pearlin's research then, is the assumption that adult emotional development is not seen as a gradual surfacing of characteristics which have always resided within the individual. Instead, it is seen as an ongoing process in which one adjusts to external circumstances, which are understood to be deeply rooted within the culture and thus affect the entire population.

Three types of such circumstances are outlined by Pearlin, each possessing the potential to cause distress. There are the dogged problems of everyday life which are very slow to change, the scheduled and highly predictable events attached to the life cycle, and finally, the less expected and often (although not always) undesirable eruptive events (p.180). It is important to note, however, that where this model diverges significantly from others (such as those of Levinson and Gould) is in its emphasis on the importance of external events in development rather than seeing it in terms of a gradual unfolding of inherent internal characteristics.

For Neugarten (1976) as well, adult development encompasses more than the individual's chronological age as a major causative variable. She outlines three types of time: historical time (based upon the calendar), life time (chronological age), and social time (the socially proscribed ages at which certain milestones are expected). From this perspective there is little biological necessity for behavior, and the emphasis is on the variability of behavior. Neugarten holds that it is the unanticipated life event rather than

the anticipated one which is likely to be perceived as traumatic. Major stresses are understood to result from events which disrupt the sequence and rhythm of the life cycle. Thus, the adult's development is cast in terms of the timing of events, and events which occur off-time are seen to be potentially disruptive.

Neugarten's views are also consonant with those of Brim (1976), who stresses the absence in the literature of any field research tying personality crises to chronological age. Here too, age-specific changes are rejected, as is the idea of life stages. Rather, the focus is upon the impact of events and mediating variables upon the individual. Change here is not understood as the result of intrapsychic development and Brim is critical of those who do understand it as such for not specifying the causes of the change.

Similarly, in her article "Adulthood as Transcendence of Age and Sex", Giele (1980) rejects the notion of chronologically linked "seasons" where certain things are learned, and emphasizes the age-independent nature of many developmental tasks in adulthood. She argues:

> Modern society is so highly developed that no coherent synchronized set of role transitions occurs for all people at a given age. Individuals encounter different experiences and negotiate the developmental process in highly individualized ways. (p.158)

Additionally, she argues that the extent to which a person is educationally and occupationally advantaged with have a significant positive effect upon how aging and adult development are experienced.

In summary, then, there is no general consensus in the existing literature as to the nature and meaning of transitions in adults' lives. Indeed, some have shifted their emphasis from that of looking st the individual to examining development in the broader context of the family as a whole. Such a shift in context has been especially apparent when chronological age is rejected as a meaningful variable around which to organize research and when one wishes to see the individual's life against the more highly complex backdrop of the other lives with whom their own are entangled. With this in mind, the following section will review the family and couples literature as it is relevant to the present study, with a particular stress upon developmental transitions.

Stages of the Family Life Cycle

For those for whom the individual life cycle provided too narrow a conceptual scope lacking a meaningful context, the notion of the family life cycle has served to broaden adult developmental theories. Here, the focus is no longer upon the individual, but rather upon the family as a whole, starting from its inception through marriage, and ending with the launching of the children from the home or the retirement of the couple. As with theories of individual adult development, there is disagreement within the literature as to the number of stages through which a family will pass, though what all these models do share is a view in which the ages and stages of one's children are assumed to be the governing force behind the family's development as a whole. Along with individual models of development, the family life cycle perspective shares the assumption that there are predictable times of transition for families. As Berger and Berger (1985) point out, this is a body of literature which points to the fact that at different times, family members must face differing sets of tasks both inside and outside of the family and possess varying resources to cope with these tasks.

Solomon (1973) postulates a developmental scheme for families loosely based on an Eriksonian model, assuming that the family must adequately master the tasks of one stage before it is then able to successfully tackle tasks pertaining to subsequent stages. Just as in individual development, passage from one stage to the next is assumed to constitute a crisis, and during transitional periods families are expected to experience some disorganization and upset.

Solomon outlines these stages, beginning with the marriage itself, during which the developmental tasks consist of the couple's relinquishment of primary gratification within the family of origin and the substitution of the marital relationship as the primary gratifying relationship. Birth of the first child heralds in Solomon's second stage, during which the couple must solidify their own relationship with each other and begin to develop new roles as parents. This second stage continues throughout subsequent child bearing. The third stage is marked by individuation of family members, prompted by the first child's departure to school and lasting throughout the adolescence of the youngest child. The following two final stages are

characterized by the actual departure of the children from the home and the couple's integration of that loss.

Barnhill and Longo (1978) are often cited for their worked in both the delineation of family life cycle stages and the application of psychoanalytic assumptions to the family's functioning. They outline nine stages of the family life span:

I. Establishment (newly married, childless)
II. New parents (infant-3 years)
III. Preschool family (child 3-6 years, possibly younger siblings)
IV. School age family (oldest child 6-12 years, possibly younger siblings)
V. Family with early adolescent (oldest 12-16, possibly younger siblings)
VI. Family with young adult (oldest 16-20 until first child leaves home)
VII. Family as launching center (from departure of first to last child)
VIII. Postparental family, the middle years (after children have left home until the father retires)
IX. Aging family (after retirement of family)

(p.470)

Progression from one stage to another implies that each family member must handle the stress inherent in such a transition. Just as in an individual psychoanalytic model, unresolved issues at any stage may result in the entire family's partial fixation at that point. Similarly, regression may occur when any stress (internal, external, or both) challenges the family's ability to cope. Thus, under such circumstances the family can often revert to previous levels of functioning as old conflicts become revived.

While the work of both Solomon and Barnhill and Longo takes adult development beyond the scope of the individual, their view, nonetheless, remains narrow insofar as they choose to focus upon the couple vis-a-vis the ages and stages of their children. Thus, this model ends up being skewed in the opposite direction from a more individualistic, intrapsychically oriented model like Levinson's. While family life cycle models, may differ on the exact number and ages associated with each stage, they tend to share this child-oriented bias. Unfortunately, the interaction between the developmental issues of the family and of the individual are glossed over.

In their overview of the family life cycle literature, Carter and McGoldrick (1980) grapple with just such questions, calling attention to the intrinsic fuzziness of this research. They ask:

> But what of family development? is it simply concurrent development at different phases of several children and adults who happen to be related? Or is the family itself the basic unit of development? Is the whole family involved in each member's development merely in the sense that each influences and reacts to the other's individual phase of life, or can the family itself be said to go through a life cycle that is the major context and determinant of development of individual family members? (p.4)

Certainly the existing literature leaves many of these questions unanswered. In addition, such models tend to characterize individuals wholly in terms of their roles (as parents), and thus contribute little in capturing the presumably more rich internal developmental experience of the individual. Neither does much of this literature attempt to address what resources individuals may have which might ease their progression from one stage to the next.

Carter and McGoldrick attempt to grapple with this necessarily complex interaction between the family and the individual, as well as with the internal and the external influences on development by delineating what they call vertical and horizontal stressors. Vertical stressors have to do with family patterns, issues, and myths, while horizontal stressors include both the developmental (e.g. life cycle transitions) and the external (war, chronic illness, or untimely death). They astutely observe that much of the literature in this field incorrectly assumes that the occurrence of some concrete event, such as the birth of a child, will automatically catapult the couple from one stage to another, when actually the existing emotional pattern may hinder the promotion of that progression (p.9).

Kaye (1985) similarly addresses this question of the reciprocal developmental effect of the family and the individual. He observes that the individual and the family must each adapt to each other and that a developmental step in one will necessarily require some adaptation on the part of the other.

In yet another attempt to trace development of the life cycle within the context of the family, Terkelsen (1980) specifies two types of developmental

transformations in families: normative and paranormative events. Normative events are defined as those directly related to childrearing and procreative functioning of the couple, whereas the paranormative, including illness, extrinsic catastrophe, disability, household relocations, miscarriage, and divorce or separation affect the family's regular momentum and are mediated by conflict (p.41). This underscores the importance of distinguishing between stressors which are planned and expected, versus those which have a greater intrusive quality, either due to their occurring out of sequence, or because of their intrinsically traumatic nature. The adult's developmental experience, however, captures both.

Nadelson, Polonsky, and Mathews (1984) begin to approach this issue by pointing out that the phases of a marriage must necessarily be superimposed against the life cycle of the individual; such individual developmental changes will invariably have an effect upon the relationship. The continually shifting nature of this relationship is especially important, so that, "If complementary shifts do not occur in both partners, the homeostatic balance of the relationship may be disturbed" (p. 127). They also observe that the charting of marital stages fails to address significant age differences or couples where partners may find themselves at different points along the life cycle.

Transitions Within the Context of the Family Life Cycle

Thus, in an effort to broaden their scope, those focusing upon the life cycle of the family as a whole tend to lose an important and rich dimension of development: the intricate interaction between the unfolding of the family and the individual. This becomes a necessarily complex and reciprocal relationship. As distinguished from authors such as Solomon and Barnhill and Longo outlined above, who at least implicitly view family development as a linear progression, Hoffman (1980) argues that when a family changes, it does not do so in a smooth and predictable manner, but rather in discontinuous leaps. Hoffman's analysis of such leaps and changes which all families must negotiate is instructive insofar as she emphasizes the stress and disruption which are inescapable concomitants of negotiating these transformations. It is at such transformation points, then, that a family

member may become symptomatic, the symptom itself expressing both the family's need to move ahead and the prohibition against it.

Ellicott (1985) has considered women's lives within the context of their families' development, in order to address the question of whether certain psychosocial changes are associated with different phases of family development. The data indicated that transitions were not randomly distributed across the six specified family cycle phases, but rather clustered around three phases: the starting a family-preschool phase, the launching phase, and the post-parental phase. While it was found that the form of each transition was idiosyncratic for each woman, most underwent a change at one or more of these three phases (p.271). In addition, it was found that more systematic changes were associated with phase of family cycle than with chronological age, a finding which reinforces the idea of women's development being strongly influenced by the significant relationships around them (p.274).

Several researchers have reviewed the effect of such transitions on the family as a whole. These transitions have a similar flavor to those experienced by the individual in that each period is often marked by feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and a sense of loss. Olson, et al. (1983), observe that during such periods, marital, parent-child, and child-child conflicts may be more difficult than usual to resolve, and that the period as a whole may be marked by the processes of adjustment, reorganization, consolidation, and adaptation. The individual family member's life stages are seen as "cogwheeling" with the stages of other family members. However, although Olson and his colleagues observe that a family whose resources to cope with such transition-linked stressors are already depleted will necessarily have less energy and capacity to deal with subsequent readjustments, they do not specify just what such "resources" consist of, or what makes some families more likely to be resourceful than others.

Similarly, Lavee, McCubbin, and Olson (1987) looked at the effect of life events and transitions on family functioning and well-being. Stressors were classified as either normative or nonnormative. In such a scheme, normative life events are those which are expectable and scheduled, involving entrances into and exits from social roles and are thought to be ubiquitous. Conversely, nonnormative stressor events are those which are unexpected and usually associated with severe effects, such as the death of a

family member or natural disaster. The authors point out that while the majority of pre-existing studies have tended to look at the effect of a single stressor event or transition upon a family, their work deals with the accumulation of these. This appears especially salient since such stressors seldom occur in isolation, but rather against a complex backdrop of already existing life events or transitions. Strains are also distinguished here as "a condition of felt tension or difficulty" and are notable for their lack of discrete onset (p.859).

Findings here indicated that neither stressful life events (such as losses or illnesses), nor transitional changes directly affected the perceived well-being of the family. However, it was found that such stressful events and transitions did influence role strains and tensions within the family, which then had an effect upon the family's perceived well-being. Normative transitions had a greater disruptive impact than stressful events such as death or serious illness. Furthermore, when the family must contend with a new stressor, prior strains are worsened. It is these strains, more than the stressor events themselves, which are felt to be disruptive through their potential to predict a decrease in well-being.

Interestingly, the authors conclude that when marital adjustment is held constant, family strain increases the family's sense of coherence and its positive assessment of the situation. Thus, this coherence may play a significant stress-buffering role in its reduction of the total effect of the strain upon the family (p.870).

While these studies certainly move us towards greater understanding of the developmentally influenced transitions and stresses that a couple must face, what once again goes unaddressed here is a greater exploration of the juxtaposition of the individual and family life cycles, and its implications. Too often the individual tends to be overlooked in favor of the focus upon the family unit and vice versa.

Rice and Rice (1986) approach an integration of the adult's ongoing development with its implications for a couple's relationship through their consideration of divorce. They observe:

> Some people manage to change in tandem with their spouses, for example, growing up together if they have married young. It is a tricky business to explore one's own identity through the personality of

> another. To do so requires several necessary and fortunate conditions. The first is the positive circumstance of having enough personal flexibility and adaptation to permit both partners not only to recognize and value change in themselves, but also to encourage this in their spouse. (p.75)

They point out that the choices to marry or to divorce often occur at junctures in the life cycle when issues of commitment and attachment are key and that either choice holds the potential to enhance or to impede the resolution of these developmental tasks. Although their emphasis is on the implications of divorce on development and how prevailing models of family development seldom prove applicable to the divorced (issues which are not particularly germane here), Rice and Rice's developmental model appears clear and useful. They propose that concepts of individual development such as separation/union and individuation/communion are inherently more relevant than outlining family development by stages of child rearing. Thus, their model focuses upon two assumed key tasks in all human development which are thought to recur over and over again with different meanings over the course of the life cycle. First, is the attainment of intimacy, where the key task is communion, or being close to another individual. The second central issue is identity. The key tasks here center around separation or individuation. The tasks which one faces throughout the individual, marital, and family cycles are all governed by the various meanings which intimacy and identity hold at a particular point. While bringing stress and conflict, a marker event such as marriage, divorce, or remarriage also has the potential for further development of these two key tasks (pp.83-84).

Marital Satisfaction and the Life Cycle

Just as the family life cycle has proved a valid context in which to examine the development of the individual, for others it has been a perspective from which to view the couple's marital satisfaction. Here, the couple's waxing and waning satisfaction is charted over the course of the various stages of the family's development.

One such study is that of Rollins and Feldman (1970), who compiled data from both husbands and wives in 799 middle class families. Not surprisingly, their findings indicate that family life cycle plays a more

influential role in the marital satisfaction of wives. For the women, there was a sharp increase in negative feelings reported following the birth of the first child, then leveling off until the children reached teenage, where a significant decline in negative feelings began, continuing to the launching stage and then leveling out through out the retirement stage (p.25). Generally, the presence of dependent children (from infancy to school age) in the home was found to be highly related to a high level of expressed dissatisfaction with the marital relationship on the part of the women.

Rollins and Feldman note that their findings are consistent with the pattern found in previous research, whereby women showed a decline a marital satisfaction over the first ten years of the marriage, or to approximately the point where the children fall into the "school age" stage. Such a pattern was far less prevalent in men. In fact, the authors suggest that marriage may have very different meanings for men and women and further, that different events both inside and outside the relationship influence the developmental pattern of satisfaction for men and women.

In a similar study, Burr (1970) examined six aspects of the marital relationship over the life course: the handling of finances, the couple's social activities, the way one's spouse handles performs household duties, companionship, sexual interaction, and relationships with one's children. Although a gradual decline over the stages of the life cycle was hypothesized, results indicated none of a systematic nature. Neither was Burr's secondary hypothesis borne out: while it was predicted that the decline in marital satisfaction would be gradual and occur over a long period rather than being substantial at one stage, in fact, the data reflected an abrupt change occurring during the transition from the pre-school to school age stage. Here there was a notable drop for both husbands and wives in most areas. Lowest satisfaction scores were found when the children were school aged (p.21).

The above two studies are typical in their consideration of marital satisfaction vis-a-vis stage of the family life cycle in that they fail to take into account more internal, individual personality characteristics which necessarily must influence how people experience their partners and relationships over the course of their lives. Thus, Swensen, Eskew, and Kohlhepp's (1981) work is unique in that it examines the marital relationship in relation to the stage of marriage (a situational variable) and the stage of ego development (a personality variable). The marital relationship was assessed

on the basis of expression of love and problems of the marriage. Results indicated that in post-parental couples, while love expression declined, so did marital problems. Disappointingly, no relationship was found between ego development, family life cycle stages, and marital problems (p. 844). They conclude:

> Over the course of a marriage, a husband and wife develop in different directions and at different rates. The pressure of the different duties of each leads to different activities and experiences for each and a subsequent change in attitudes, interests, values, and feelings. The pressure of jobs, children, and other concerns external to the marriage relationship prevent a husband and wife from maintaining intimate contact with each other (pp.850-51).

In their review of existing literature on marital satisfaction over the life cycle, Olson, et al. (1983) observe the trend that marital satisfaction tends to take the shape of a shallow U-curve: generally there is a decline in satisfaction following the birth of the first child and a subsequent rise as the children grow older and are eventually launched from the home (p.178). Olson's own work confirms this, however adding that such changes in satisfaction over the life cycle are slight. Husbands tended to assess the overall quality of their lives more positively than wives across all stages of the life cycle, yet once again, these were small differences.

While much of this research may have succeeded in describing typical patterns of marital satisfaction as they rise and decline over the life cycle, far less attention has been directed at addressing the underlying reasons for such fluctuations. It has been suggested that women are more directly influenced by the ages and developmental stages of their children than men because they have traditionally been much more involved in family life, whereas men have tended to have been more occupationally influenced. In an attempt to get at the underlying reasons behind this variation, Steinberg and Silverberg (1987) studied 129 couples both cross-sectionally and longitudinally, in order to examine three sets of influences on marital satisfaction during the transitional period during which the couples' first born children were between childhood and adolescence (ages 10-15). These influences studied were: aspects of the adolescent's development, features of the parent-child relationship, and the psychological characteristics of mid-life adults. Their

results suggest that aspects of the parent-child relationship may play a causal role in their influence on marital satisfaction. However, this was found only in parents and children of the same sex. In other words, marital satisfaction was negatively influenced by the distance in the father-son or mother-daughter relationship. Additionally, heightened midlife identity concerns among the women in the sample appeared to cause a drop in satisfaction (p.757).

Couples and Object Relations Theory

Object relations represents both a powerful descriptive and developmental schema; it is one which is particularly relevant to this study in its ability to explain the nature of the individual's relations with others from an internal as well as an external viewpoint. This matters here in that a couple's relationship obviously is not the mere product of the accumulation of transitions foisted upon it. Demographic variables will necessarily have an effect upon how such changes are perceived and negotiated, but the internal assets one brings to the relationship must also enter into the equation. While there may be divergence and disagreement among object relations theorists, here the term "object relations" will refer to "the individual's interactions with external and internal (real and imagined) other people, and the relationship between their internal and external object worlds" (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983, pp. 13-14).

The work of Dicks (1963) has been instrumental in understanding couples from such a perspective. He presents three hypotheses: that "built-in" role models for the marital relationship are based upon ambivalent relations to earlier love objects which are usually the person's parents, though not necessarily those of the opposite sex; secondly, that sometimes such a similarity may be replaced by an apparent superficial contrast to the past love-object; and thirdly, that marital behavior in some couples may best be interpreted as persecution in the partner of those traits, weaknesses, or faults which are rejected by the self. Conversely, one may love or seek in one's partner those aspects of the self which are found to be missing. In each case, Dicks observes that one's spouse is emotionally perceived as if he or she were either some other person or a part of a person (p.125). The outstanding feature of this conceptualization is that especially during times of conflict, a

great deal of projection is employed. Another crucial aspect of this dynamic stems from the frustrated nature of the individual's relationship with his or her parent: because of this condition, splitting occurs, and the persistent hate felt for that primary figure becomes located both inside the self towards the object, and towards the self in the object from outside (p.127).

In essence, what Dicks describes here as the cornerstone of his view is the almost ubiquitous use of projective identification in such couples. Zinner (1976) summarizes this process in couples quite cogently, breaking it down into the following four aspects:

1) The subject perceives the object as if the object contained elements of the subject's personality.

2) The subject can evoke behaviors or feelings in the object that confirm the subject's perceptions.

3) The subject can experience vicariously the activity and feelings of the object.

4) Participants in close relationships are often in collusion with one another to sustain mutual projections, i.e., to support one another's defensive operations and to provide experiences through which the other can participate vicariously. (p.295)

Thus, the combination of the above processes results in bringing intrapsychic conflict into an interpersonal sphere. However, it is important to realize, as Zinner notes, that the employment of these projective identification mechanisms occurs along a continuum spanning from the frankly pathological to the healthy. So, on one end of the spectrum, self and object representations may become merged to the degree that perception of one's spouse may reach delusional proportions, while at the "healthy" end, projective identification allows one an empathic understanding of one's partner's subjective experience drawn from one's own past experience within one's own family of origin. Thus, projective mechanisms may serve to enhance the relationship to the extent that they are used to share experience. Where a particular couple may fall along this continuum will depend upon the capacity of both partners to experience each other as separate and differentiated individuals and on the intensity of their need for defense (pp.297-8).

Meissner (1978) has also endeavored to look at marriage from such a perspective:

> ... the relative success that marital partners experience and the manner in which these developmental tasks are approached and accomplished are determined to a large extent by the residues of internalized objects and the organization of introjects which form the core of the self and contribute in significant ways to the integration of their respective identities. (p. 27)

Thus, the degree to which the self is differentiated and autonomous becomes a key criterion for quality and nature of the relationship. To the extent that one or more partners may be burdened with unresolved developmental conflicts which then are inevitably played out within the marital relationship, tensions and difficulties will surely arise. The emphasis here, however, is on pathology at the individual level, and resulting discord within the couple is viewed as a symptom of such pathology residing in one or both partners (Seagraves, 1982).

Berkowitz (1984) makes a similar observation that in those couples where there is a considerable lack of differentiation between self and object, projective identification is likely to play a significant role. Conflict within the individual becomes externalized and assumes the form of interpersonal conflict between partners (p.118). Also contributing to marital discord may be the employment of identification with the aggressor, or the reliance of one partner on the other to be confirmed or validated, so that the interruption of such an attachment can lead to depression, vengeful behavior, or narcissistic rage (pp. 122-3).

In an later article, Berkowitz (1985) focuses upon the self-esteem regulation which occurs within the couple. Borrowing from Kohut, he argues that in those individuals where early narcissism has been damaged, attempts at reparation will be life-long, resulting in attempts to be either merged with or mirrored by an omnipotent other. While self-esteem may be precariously maintained through the attachment to such an idealized object, this solution carries with it the insistence that the self-object (the spouse, in this case) be perfect, and demands an uninterrupted attachment to it. These unresolved developmental problems must necessarily influence the marital relationship (pp.230-1).

Elaborating on the theme of idealization in marital relationships, Goethals, Steele, and Broude (1976) point out that when such idealization falters, marital discord and tensions tend to result. Regressive behavior in both spouses tends to result as each now sees the other cast in the role of the frustrating, ungiving, and hated primary object (pp.255-6).

In this context, it becomes easy to imagine how a major transition (whether internally generated or externally imposed) affecting one partner might have serious implications in its potential to upset preexisitng patterns of idealization and collusion. It appears that such changes might serve as catalysts to interrupt these cycles of projective identification in such a way that one or both spouses might become disillusioned in the face of their partner's not conforming to the expected role. In poorly differentiated couples, or those where one's partner is relied upon excessively to bolster self-esteem, these transitions may have the potential to threaten the already precarious integrity of the relationship. Conversely, in couples where there is a solid empathic grasp of the other's experience and less fragility and rigidity, the impact of such changes takes on a very different quality: if one's sense of self does not hinge delicately upon a static view of one's spouse, the change may present the potential for further growth and intimacy for both individuals.

Feldman (1982) proposes the concept of narcissistic vulnerability as the core of marital dysfunction. This vulnerability is described as "a weakness or deficiency in the structural cohesiveness, temporal stability, and/or affective coloring of the self-representation" and is seen as stemming from "the relative weakness of internalized positive (accepting, approving, admiring) introjects and the relative strength of internalized negative (rejecting, disapproving, deprecating) introjects. " (p.47)

Such couples are likely to suffer from hypersensitivity, narcissistic expectations that the other will be totally and consistently devoted the the gratification of one's own needs, and unempathic behavior, resulting from a lack of sensitivity to one's partner since each spouse is so deeply focused on the maintenance of his or her own precarious self esteem.

Of course, at the heart of the projective processes and the lack of sufficient differentiation outlined above is the defensive mechanism of splitting. Stewart, et al. (1975) point out that in order for the other person to be endowed with disowned parts of the self, these have to be split off in the

first place. An equally important aspect to this process is the collusion between partners, as the recipient of those split-off parts tends not to disown those parts, but rather acts in a way which instead confirms the projection. While this may isn't necessarily problematic or pathological, problems often arise when previously assigned roles break down. It is at this point that discomfort or symptom formation may arise (p.166).

Yet another facet to this projective process has to do with one spouse's misperception of the other (Greenspan and Mannino, 1974). This becomes significant insofar as those aspects of the individual which are inconsistent with the misperception go unnoticed, and thus this distortion is maintained and validated. In this fashion the pattern gets repeated over and over again. As each individual focuses on his or her own fears, there is a growing inability to successfully empathize with the feelings of the other which fall into this perceptually distorted area (p. 1103). This misperception described by Greenspan and Mannino seems to explicate yet another aspect of the splitting process whereby intolerable parts of the self become located in the other.

However, even when both partners are well individuated and do not bring excessive narcissistic expectations to the relationship, Kernberg (1980) points out that this in no way assumes an enduring synchrony within the marriage. The individual's growth and the couple's growth will not necessarily coincide:

> ... emotional maturity is no guarantee that the couple will be stable and conflict free. The very capacity to love and to realistically appreciate and evaluate another person over the years, and to be committed to the values and experiences of a life lived together, may reconfirm the relationship or lead to its termination... Both individuals and couples change, and neurotic reasons for remaining together may be resolved... or they may intensify and create stress on the marriage; or increasing maturity may open new areas of freedom and cause the couple to reexamine realistically the basis of the marriage. (pp.279-280

Kernberg's observations are especially relevant here insofar as they speak to conflict as the product of individual development tensions which then get played out within the context of the dyad. While it seems likely that these stresses must necesarily have an impact upon one's partner, it is precisely this question of just what this effect might be and of how it is handled by the couple that is missing from the existing literature.

Aims of the Present Study: Design & Research Hypotheses

The preceding literature review demonstrates that while there has been extensive inquiry into the developmental pathways of men and women, the family life cycle, marital satisfaction, and the role of object relations within couples' relationships, the integration of these factors has been strikingly absent from existing research. This study sought to address how maturational forces combine with the individual's internal representational world to then consequently impact upon the subjective perception of marital satisfaction.

The study examined three main variables: the extent to which the individual was in the midst of developmental flux (e.g., the level of transition), the individual's level of object relations, and finally, the subjective perception of marital adjustment and satisfaction. There was an additional interest in the interactional effect of developmental transitions and level of object relations upon marital adjustment and satisfaction. Though the couple's functioning as a unit was relevant, it was beyond the scope of this research to investigate both men's and women's experience of these factors and so only women participated.

The hypotheses that were tested in the study were:

1. Level of object relations will be positively correlated with marital adjustment/satisfaction.

2. Developmental transitions per se will not be correlated with marital adjustment/satisfaction.

3. There will be an interaction between level of object relations and developmental transitions such that participants with high object relations and low developmental transition scores will manifest the highest adjustment/satisfaction scores, followed in order by those with high object relations and transition scores, those with low object relations and low transition scores, and those with low object relations and high transition scores. Differences among these groups will be significant, with the greatest difference occurring between the adjacent groups with the two lowest adjustment/satisfaction scores.

While a high level of internal flux in one member of the couple may have the potential to further cement a relationship where there is a

preexisting sense of individuation and secure attachment, it might not be known until some time afterward whether such transitions produce an ultimately salubrious effect. The same urgent developmental presses possess the potential to disrupt a relationship where one's sense of self hinges precariously upon one's partner's. In this case, the individuals' lack of resilience may prevent the couple from recovering whatever balance once existed. It is at the low end of the object relations spectrum, where relationships are especially brittle, that developmental transitions were hypothesized to have a particularly negative catalytic effect. Thus, while it was expected that level of martial adjustment/satisfaction declines as object relations level declines, and that a concentration of transitions within a couple has at least a temporarily disorganizing effect, this upset was expected to be much more powerful in the lower ranges of object relational development; this is why the greatest discrepancy in marital satisfaction scores was predicted to be between the two low object relations groups which were comparatively stable and those which were transitional.

In addition, there were several other variables which were tested to see if they yielded potentially interesting correlations. These pertained to the various demographic factors and whether or not they bore any relationship to the outcome measure of perception of marital satisfaction. This section of the study was exploratory, as it was unclear whether any significant relationships would emerge.

A detailed description of the measures used in the study will be provided in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

Method

Overview of Procedure

Ninety-eight married women between the ages of 27 and 35 were the participants of this study, 65 of whom had children and 33 of whom did not. In order to obtain the data for the study, all subjects completed four paper-and-pencil measures, consisting of the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Olson's Family Inventory of Life Events, Bell's Object Relations and Reality Testing Inventory, and the researcher developed Developmental Concerns Questionnaire. These measures were sent to participants and returned by mail.

Additionally, ten of the women (five with children and five without) were interviewed in order to gain more information about the nature of recent developmental changes, their responses to these changes, and how they understood them affecting their marriages. The purpose of these interviews was not empirical, but rather to obtain supplementary anecdotal information about the nature of the developmental changes these women had undergone and how they affect their marital relationships. Seven of the interviews were conducted in the participants' homes; the remaining three were conducted in the researcher's home. Interviews typically lasted about one hour.

Participants

Recruitment

Though the researcher was interested in how transitions occurring in both members of a couple affect the marital relationship, it was beyond the scope of the study to investigate both men and women and so only women participated. The women were recruited from three major sources: from a local synagogue, from the researcher's undergraduate college directory, and from a more informal network, such as the researcher's acquaintances,

professional colleagues, and neighbors. In order to be eligible for participation in the study, women had to be married at least two years and had to be between the ages of 27 and 35. This age group was sought since the literature suggested that a variety of transitions tend to cluster around these ages. Both women with and without children were solicited.

Regarding the first source, the rabbi of the synagogue was contacted and the nature of the study was explained. After permission to contact congregants was given, a mailing list was obtained and potential participants were sent a packet containing a letter describing the purpose of the study and criteria for inclusion, the measures described below, and a stamped envelope to be returned to the researcher with the completed materials. Women were also asked whether they would agree to be interviewed on related developmental issues at a later date. A total of 160 packets were sent out. Of these, 10% (16 women) returned uncompleted packets, explaining that they were too old to meet the selection criteria. Another packet was returned unopened, as this woman had apparently moved and left no forwarding address, representing .62% of the total number sent out. Another 25 women (16%) ultimately completed and returned materials that were included for use in the study, representing 26% of the total study sample. It was unclear whether a higher response rate was not obtained because these women were hesitant to answer some fairly intimate questions, or because a larger percentage than the 10% who returned unopened questionnaires were older than the 35 year old cut off for selection, but simply never responded. There was, of course, no way of knowing ahead of time the age distribution of the 160 women contacted.

Similar procedures were followed in contacting potential participants from the other two sources. A class of 1979 Cornell Alumni Directory was used in contacting another pool of potential respondents, targeting women of the correct age group (approximately 31 years old). The directory was also helpful in indicating which of the listed women had married. No permission was required as this was a public domain document. A total of 116 packets were mailed to women living in the New York tri-state area. Of these, 28 (24%) were returned to the researcher unopened, a result of the women having moved in the interim without forwarding addresses. Another 42 were completed and returned. Of these, one had to be discarded since one of

the measures was not completed. The other 41 completed packets (35%) represented 42% of the entire study sample.

Finally, 52 packets were distributed through the researcher's personal contacts, including, friends, neighbors, professional colleagues, recommendations of women who had already participated, etc. Of these, 32 (62%) were returned and included in the study. That this was by far the highest response rate from the three recruitment sources strongly suggests that some more personal connection to the researcher made women much more likely to respond. These women made up 33% of the total study sample.

On the whole, it was somewhat more difficult to find childless participants than those with children, no doubt because a minority of married women in this age group do not have children. This accounted for the size imbalance between the two groups (N=65 vs. N=33).
Appendix A contains the recruitment letters sent, as well as the consent forms participants were asked to sign.

Sample Characteristics

All of the participants of the study were married women between the ages of 27 and 35. Of the 98 participants, 65 had children and 33 did not.

The mean age of the sample was 31.4. The mean age of the women's husbands was 33. Participants had been married an average of 5.6 years, with a range of 2 through 14 years. Only two of the women had been previously married (2%). Nine of the participants' husbands (9%) had been previously married.

The average number of children in the sample was just under one (.97), the mean age of the oldest child being 2.9 years and the mean age of the youngest being 1.7 years.

The participants represented a highly educated group. Of the total sample, 2% had completed only high school, 32% had completed college, and 66% had some graduate or professional training. Their husbands had very similar educational backgrounds.

In terms of religion, 21% were Protestant, 19% were Catholic, 50% were Jewish, 6% classified themselves as having other religions, and 3% of the sample said they had no religious affiliation. Participants rated themselves

on the average as being moderately observant. Once again, nearly identical patterns emerged for their husbands.

Concerning ethnic background, 94% identified themselves as white, 2% as black, 1% as Hispanic, and 3% as Asian.

Instrumentation

Paper-and-Pencil Measures

1) **Bell Object Relations and Reality Testing Inventory**:

(Billington and Bell, 1985)

Description:

The BORRTI is a self-administered paper and pencil inventory consisting of 90 descriptive statements to which the respondent marks "true" or "false" about his or her "most recent experience". Scoring yields 4 Object Relations (OR) subscales and 3 Reality Testing (RT) subscales. Object Relations subscales are: Alienation (Aln), Insecure Attachment (IA), Egocentricity (Egc), and Social Incompetence (SI). Reality Testing Subscales are Reality Distortion (RD), Uncertainty of Perception (UP), and Hallucinations and Delusions (HD).

Object Relations and Reality Testing are each presented by 45 items which are worded to reflect differing levels of object relations, reality testing, and ego functioning. This study employed only the 45 Object Relations items, omitting those questions pertaining to Reality Testing.

Descriptions of Object Relations subscales are as follows:

Alienation (Aln): This subscale is composed of items which reflect a fundamental lack of trust in relationships. Those with high scores here feel incapable of achieving closeness with anyone and have little hope of ever being able to maintain a longterm intimate and satisfying relationship. Instead, such relationships tend to be superficial and lack any enduring sense of belonging or connection. High scorers are often suspicious and guarded, isolative, and have no one with which they feel comfortable enough to share intimate thoughts and feelings. Since they are convinced that others will let them down, they are often hesitant to become involved in relationships in

the first place. Their empathy is limited, and their perception of others' motivations and inner states is often misjudged or ignored. Relationships tend to be stormy and dependent and are disrupted by rage and consequent angry withdrawal, a pattern which repeats itself many times.

Insecure Attachment (IA): High scorers here are characterized by the painfulness of interpersonal relationships, being very sensitive to rejection and easily hurt by others. While relationships may be sought out because of a desperate longing for closeness and connection, separations, loneliness, and losses are not tolerated well. These relationships tend to be colored by pervasive guilt, worry, anxiety, and jealousy, and there is often a sadomasochistic quality to them. There is a constant seeking of reassurance of the others' acceptance, leading to hypervigilance for any indications of potential abandonment. Traumatic reactions to rejection or loss of love are common since there is insufficient object constancy to maintain a secure sense of connection when the other person is not present. Since others are experienced as extensions of the self, any attempts on their part to achieve a more differentiated identity are felt to be a personal threat.

Egocentricity (Egc): Those with high scores in this subscale see others only in relation to themselves, manipulate others for their own self-centered aims, and are mistrustful of others' motivations. Thus, high scorers here take a self-protective and exploitive attitude towards others which often results in their being demanding, coercive, intrusive, and controlling, with little sense of how others may be feeling. Any cooperative or joint effort becomes impossible because of the conviction they hold that others will surely try to stab them in the back and humiliate them if given the chance. The self is either viewed as the omnipotent center of the universe, or, conversely, as subject to the powerful force of others from which it is impossible to escape.

Social Incompetence (SI): High scorers here are characterized by their shyness, nervousness, and uncertainty, especially around members of the opposite sex. All relationships, and especially those with the opposite sex, seem puzzling and unpredictable, often causing a generalized state of anxiety that is relieved only through a withdrawal from the interpersonal field. Such

persons feel themselves acutely cut off from the rest of society by this gulf of confusion and fear which cannot be bridged.

Reliability and Validity:

Factor analysis of the Bell Object Relations Inventory (embedded in the larger questionnaire which also measures the reality testing ego function) produced four subscaled which the authors interpreted to be the underlying dimensions of object relations. These are as stated above: Alienation, Insecure Attachment, Egocentricity, and Social Incompetence. Subscales had high internal consistency and were free of age, sex, or social desirability bias. The finding that subscales had low intercorrelations with Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale sum scores and Global Assessment Scale scores, as well as most BPRS symptoms leads the authors to conclude, "Subscales appear to represent common features of personality and to sample a domain that is distinct from symptomatology, but related to variations in psychopathology." (Bell, Billington, and Becker, 1986, p. 733) When factor loadings were replicated within a second sample, the similarity coefficients between the first and second samples for the four factors were .97, .90, .84, and .93. Pearson correlations between the two factor scores obtained from each subject were, for the four factors, .98, .96, .87, and .97.

2) **Family Inventory of Life Events (FILE)**:

(McCubbin, Patterson, and Wilson, 1981)

Description:

The Family Inventory of Life Events (FILE) is a 71 item self-report instrument which is designed to record normative and nonnormative life events and changes experienced by the family unit during the past year, as well as certain life events (34 of the total 71) which have been experienced prior to the past year. The latter are those events which often take longer to adapt to, or are intrinsically chronic in their nature and hence tend to generate a prolonged residue of strain and potential distress.

The initial selection of items in the FILE was partially guided by those life changes appearing in individual life change inventories. Developmental and situational changes which are experienced by families at different points over the life cycle were included as well.

The following conceptual dimensions are included in the FILE:

I. Intra-family strains: 17 items which combine 2 dimensions:
1) Conflict: 12 items reflect sources of conflict and tension between family members. Several items are worded to reflect an increase in normative sources of intra-family strain.
2) Parenting strains: 5 items related specifically to increased difficulties in carrying out the parenting role.

II. Marital strains: 4 items measuring stressors in the marital role arising from sexual or separation issues.

III. Pregnancy and childbearing strains: 4 items relating to pregnancy difficulties or adding a new member to the family.

IV. Finances and business strains: 12 items comprised of 2 dimensions:
1) Family finances: 9 items which assess sources of increased strain on the family's money supply.
2) Family business: 3 items reflecting strains stemming from a family-owned business or investments.

V. Work-family transitions and strains: 10 items comprised of 2 dimensions:
1) Work transitions: 4 items relating to moving in/out if the work force.
2) Family transitions and work strains: 6 items which focus on changes occurring at work or moves made by the family or one of its members.

VI. Illness and family "care" strains: 8 items comprised of 3 dimensions:
1) Illness onset and child care: 4 items reflecting dependency needs arising from injury or illness of a family member or friend or problems with child care.
2) Chronic illness strains: 2 items related to the onset of or increased difficulty with chronic illness.
3) Dependency strains: 2 items reflecting the strain of a member requiring more care or help.

VII. Losses: 6 items reflecting losses due to the death of a member or friend, or due to a broken relationship.

VIII. Transitions "in and out": 5 items reflecting a member's moving out or moving back home or beginning a major involvement outside the family.

IX. Legal: 5 items focusing upon a member's breaking society's laws or mores.

Reliability and Validity:

The overall scale reliability is .81 and test-retest reliability (after five weeks) is .80. Subscale scores vary from .73 to .30, resulting in the author's observation that internal consistency is most soundly established for the total scale, with subscales (with the exception of intrafamily strain) being less stable. It is their recommendation that only the total scale be used, rather than the individual subscales.

3. **Dyadic Adjustment Scale**:
(Spanier, 1976)

Description:

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale is a 32 item, paper-and-pencil test, which may be self-administered. It includes four subscales which measure: Dyadic Satisfaction (10 items), Dyadic Cohesion (5 items), Dyadic Consensus (13 items), and Affectional Expression (4 items). Some items in the scale were drawn from other scales, while others were developed specifically for this measure. The test yields scores which range from 0 to 151, with higher scores representing better adjustment to marriage. Respondents are asked to indicate the extent of their agreement/disagreement with their partners on a variety of issues using a Likert type scale.

Reliability and Validity:

Reliability for the entire scale is .96. Reliability for the individual subscales is as follows: Dyadic Consensus (.90), Dyadic Satisfaction (.94), Dyadic Cohesion (.86), and Affectional Expression (.73), rendering the latter the most unstable of the four.

Items in the scale were evaluated for content validity by three judges based upon three criteria. First, they had to be considered relevant measures of dyadic adjustment for relationships in the 1970's. Secondly, they had to be consistent with definitions previously suggested by Spanier and Cole (1974) for adjustment and the components of cohesion, consensus, and satisfaction. Finally, all items had to be worded carefully with appropriate responses. It was found that a married sample yielded significantly higher scores than a divorced sample (114.8 versus 70.7).

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale showed a correlation of .86 among married respondents and .88 among divorced respondents with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test, another scale frequently used to assess marital adjustment.

4. Developmental Concerns Questionnaire:

Description:

This is a 25 item, 4-point Likert-scale test designed by the researcher especially for this study. The range on this scale is from zero to 75 with higher scores representing greater amounts on internal developmental upheaval. The rationale for its inclusion stemmed from the fact that while the FILE appeared to be a fairly comprehensive catalogue of of concrete life events which may have developmental implications, it was lacking in its ability to tap an individual's more internal concerns. Thus, this questionnaire focuses more upon the person's inner sense of developmental upheaval: a preoccupation with a reordering of priorities, an increased questioning of one's current life structure, as is suggested by the writings of both Levinson (1978) and Schlossberg (1984).

Five of the total 25 items on this scale were designed to screen participants who might be clinically depressed, since the preoccupation and anxiety reported to be evidenced by individuals undergoing some developmental flux or life change have also been described in those who are suffering from depression. These depression items, interspersed with the others, were drawn from the Beck Depression Inventory and were scored separately from the developmental items. The Beck Depression Inventory measures the physical, behavioral, cognitive, and affective manifestations of depresssion.

While undergoing development, the Developmental Concerns Questionnaire was reviewed for face validity by three independent judges familiar with the relevant literature. Their suggestions were incorporated into the final instrument. Based on the data obtained from the present study, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the Developmental Concerns Questionnaire. The obtained value of this internal consistency reliability coefficient was .88, suggesting that the scale was reliable. Item total correlations ranged from .26 to .75.

Appendix B contains all the measures described above.

Interview Questions

The interview was designed by the researcher to obtain more information about a woman's recent developmental experiences and the impact they may have had on her and her marital relationship. Thus, questions were focused upon not only her own reactions to anticipated or recent changes, but upon her perceptions of her husband's reactions to them as well, since the researcher was interested in the reciprocal influence of such changes. Additional information was gathered on the timing in couples of such changes (whether partners tended to be synchronous or not in undertaking such shifts). The emphasis maintained throughout was upon individual shifts and their impact on the couple as a unit, on how these changes were understood and defined, and on each member's own individual style of handling the change. Questions were completely open-ended and used to gain more anecdotal information and to highlight themes already tapped by the previous paper-and-pencil measures. Appendix C contains all the questions included in the interview.

Data Analysis Strategy

The following statistical procedures were employed to test the study's hypotheses:

> Hypothesis I: Level of object relations is positively correlated with marital adjustment/satisfaction.

Hypothesis I was tested by using a 4x5 Pearson correlation matrix in which the 4 BORRTI Object Relations subscales were correlated with the 5 Dyadic Adjustment Scale scores (the 4 subscales plus total score).

> Hypothesis II: Developmental transitions per se are not correlated with marital adjustment/satisfaction.

Hypothesis II was tested by using a 2x5 Pearson correlation matrix in which total FILE scores and Developmental Concerns Questionnaire scores were correlated with the 5 Dyadic Adjustment Scales scores (the 4 subscale scores plus total score).

> Hypothesis III: The interaction of the level of object relations with developmental transitions is such that respondents with high object relations and low developmental transition scores will manifest the highest marital satisfaction, followed in order by those with high object relations and high transition scores, those with low object relations and low transition scores, and finally those with low object relations and high transition scores. It was predicted that all pairwise differences among these groups would be significant, with the greatest difference appearing between the adjacent groups with the two lowest marital satisfaction scores.

Hypothesis III was tested by using a hierarchical multiple regression analysis in which object relations and developmental transition scores were first entered together in order to determine the unique relationship of each of the two independent variables with the dependent marital adjustment/satisfaction variable. The interaction of the object relations and

developmental transitions variable was then be entered. This enabled the analysis of the unique relationship of each of the various subscales with each other.

In addition, a 2 way ANOVA was used to test the interaction effect within the four groups outlined in Hypothesis III. Finally, in order to investigate whether any possibly significant relationships emerged between several additional demographic variables (e.g., age difference between spouses, number of children, number of years married, and educational/professional background) and the marital satisfaction variable, Pearson correlations were performed.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Overview of the Results

This study was designed to explore the relationships between marital adjustment/satisfaction and: (1) level of object relations and (2) developmental transitions. It was hypothesized that level of object relations would be correlated positively with marital adjustment. It was further hypothesized that developmental transitions per se would not be correlated with marital adjustment. Finally, it was hypothesized that there would be an interaction between level of object relations and developmental transitions such that respondents with high object relations and low developmental transitions scores would manifest the highest marital adjustment/ satisfaction, followed in order by those with high object relations and high transition scores, those with low object relations and low transition scores, and those with low object relations and high transition scores. It was expected that all pairwise differences among these groups would be significant, with the greatest difference appearing between the adjacent groups with the two lowest adjustment scores.

In this chapter the results of statistical analyses carried out to test these hypotheses are presented. These results have been organized under headings corresponding to the three hypotheses. In addition, analyses are presented relating the variables of interest to respondent demographic characteristics.

Level of Object Relations and Marital Adjustment/Satisfaction

In this study object relations were measured by the Bell Object Relations and Reality Testing Inventory, (BORRTI) which includes four subscales representing alienation, insecure attachment, egocentricity, and social incompetence. Marital adjustment/satisfaction was assessed by the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale, which yields subscale scores for consensus, satisfaction, cohesion, and affectional expression, as well as a total dyadic adjustment score.

Hypothesis I was tested by calculating two 4x5 matrices of Pearson correlations between the BORRTI scales and the Spanier scales, one for respondents with children and one for respondents without children. Since this hypothesis was directional in nature, each correlation in each matrix was evaluated for significance with a one-tailed test.

These correlations are presented in Table I. Since higher numerical scores on the BORRTI scales represent lower levels of object relations, the negative correlation coefficients in the table indicate positive linear relationships between level of object representation and dyadic adjustment. Eleven of the twenty correlations were significant among the groups of respondents without children, and sixteen of the twenty correlations were significant among the group of respondents with children.

Among the group without children, the correlations ranged from -.09 to -.54, with a median of -.31. Among the group with children, the correlations ranged from -.06 to -.53 with a median of -.32. Thus, the magnitudes of the observed correlations were quite similar in the two groups, with generally moderate positive relationships between the BORRTI and Spanier scales. The difference between the two groups in terms of the number of significant correlations was probably due to the difference in the sizes of the two groups.

Among respondents without children, total dyadic adjustment was correlated significantly with three of the four BORRTI subscales (alienation, insecure attachment, and egocentricity). Among those having children, total dyadic adjustment was correlated significantly with all four BORRTI subscales. These correlations clearly confirm Hypothesis I. There is a moderate positive relationship between level of object relations and marital adjustment/satisfaction.

TABLE 1

Pearson Correlations Between BORRTI Object Relations Scales and Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scores Among Respondents With and Without Children

SPANIER DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE	BORRTI							
	Alienation		Insecure Attachment		Egocentricity		Social Incompetence	
	No Childrn (N=33)	With Childrn (N=65)	No Childrn (N=33)	With Childrn (N=65)	No Childrn (N=33)	With Childrn (N=65)	No Childrn (N=33)	With Childrn (N=65)
CONSENSUS	-.40**	-.39**	-.39*	-.25*	-.40*	-.33**	-.15	-.47***
SATISFACTION	-.51	-.48***	-.32*	-.25*	-.30*	-.33**	-.11	-.43***
COHESION	-.20	-.50***	-.09	-.31**	-.16	-.25*	-.21	-.34**
AFFECTIONAL EXPRESSION	-.54***	-.16	-.41**	-.16	-.21	-.17	-.30*	-.06
TOTAL	-.50**	-.53***	-.38*	-.32**	-.39*	-.37**	-.20	-.50***

* P<.05 (one-tailed)

** p<.01 (one-tailed)

*** p<.001 (one-tailed)

Developmental Transitions and Marital Adjustment/Satisfaction

Developmental transitions were measured by the combined past and recent life events noted on the Family Inventory of Life Events (FILE), as well as by total scores on the researcher developed Developmental Concerns Questionnaire (DCQ). Hypothesis II was tested by calculating two 2x5 matrices of Pearson correlations between the measures of developmental transitions and the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale, one for respondents with children and one for respondents without children. Since no relationships were expected, the hypothesis was non-directional and these correlations were evaluated by means of two-tailed tests.

These correlations are presented in Table 2. Since higher scores on the total FILE and DCQ represent a greater level of transition, the negative correlations in the table indicate negative linear relationships between developmental transitions and dyadic adjustment/satisfaction. Among respondents without children, two of ten correlations were significant, including that between total life events and total dyadic adjustment/satisfaction ($r=-.36$, $p<.05$). Among respondents with children, seven of the ten correlations were significant, including the correlations between total dyadic adjustment/satisfaction and both total life events ($r=-.28$, $p<.05$) and developmental concerns ($r=-.60$, $p<.001$).

Among the group without children, the correlations in Table 2 ranged from -.10 to -.36, with a median of -.27. Among the group with children, the correlations ranged from -.13 to -.60, with a median of -.36. There appears to be a weak negative relationship between level of developmental transitions and marital adjustment among those without children, while a moderate negative relationship exists between level of developmental and marital adjustment among those with children.

TABLE 2

Pearson Correlations Between Developmental Transition Measures and Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scores Among Respondents With and Without Children

SPANIER DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE	Total File Score		Developmental Concerns Questionnaire	
	No Childrn (N=33)	With Childrn (N=65)	No Childrn (N=33)	With Childrn (N=64)†
CONSENSUS	-.31	-.21	-.16	-.49***
SATISFACTION	-.22	-.28*	-.35*	-.55***
COHESION	-.32	-.13	-.10	-.47***
AFFECTIONAL EXPRESSION	-.31	-.44***	-.25	-.23
TOTAL	-.36*	-.28*	-.25	-.60***

* P<.05 (two-tailed)

*** p<.001 (two-tailed)

† One respondent omitted several DCQ items and did not receive a total score on this measure

The Interactive Effect on Marital Adjustment of Level of Object Relations and Developmental Transitions

The third hypothesis concerned the interactive effect of level of object relations and developmental transitions on marital adjustment/ satisfaction. This hypothesis was tested using two different measures of developmental transition: the total score on the researcher developed DCQ and the total combined score of recent and past life events as assessed by the FILE. Some consideration had been given to combining these two measures to form a single index of developmental transition, but the correlation between the two measures for the total sample was only .24, indicating that they were tapping quite different domains. Therefore the two measures were analyzed separately.

For both the analysis focusing on the DCQ and that focusing on total life events as measured by the FILE, two different statistical procedures were employed: hierarchical multiple regression and analysis of the variance. In order to obtain the maximum statistical power of the test for the significance of the interaction of level of object relations and each measure of developmental transition, a hierarchical multiple regression was employed. In each of these two regressions, the dependent variable was the total dyadic adjustment/satisfaction score.

The first regression included as predictors (1) the overall level of object relations score derived from the BORRTI, (2) the total DCQ score, and (3) a product term representing the interaction of object relations and the developmental concerns (Pedhazur, 1982). The second regression included as predictors (1) the overall level of object relations score derived from the BORRTI, (2) the total life events score from the FILE, and (3) a product term representing the interaction of object relations and life events. Due to the limited sample size, both of these regressions were computed based on the total sample, pooling respondents with and without children. The regressions were calculated hierarchically, with the interaction terms introduced after the main effects.

Along with each regression, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. In these ANOVAS, the dependent variable was again marital adjustment/satisfaction. The predictors in the first ANOVA were the dichotomized object relations and DCQ scores, and the predictors in the

second ANOVA were the dichotomized object relations and life events scores. In each instance, the independent variables were dichotomized by means of a median split of the respective frequency distributions. The ANOVAs were performed for heuristic purposes, to illustrate clearly the nature of the interactions and to allow for the mean comparisons of specific groups of subjects.

Analysis Including Developmental Concerns

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression of marital adjustment on object relations, DCQ scores, and their interaction. The table indicates that the main effects of object relations and developmental concerns were both significant predictors of marital adjustment/satisfaction when they were introduced at the first step. Together, the two main effects explained 28% of the variability in marital adjustment. When the interaction term was introduced at the next step, the interaction was significant and the proportion of variability explained increased to 31%. Thus, the interactive effect of object relations and developmental concerns did explain slightly more of the variability in marital adjustment than the main effects alone. The nature of the interaction is indicated in the results of the analysis of variance presented in Table 4.

Paralleling the results of the regression analysis, the ANOVA of marital adjustment by level of object relations and developmental concerns yielded significant main effects for level of object relations ($p<.05$) and developmental concerns ($p<.001$) and a significant interaction effect ($p<.05$). The significant interaction suggests that the results of this analysis can be understood only through comparison of cell means, since the effect of developmental concerns varies depending on level of object relations.

Referring to the means in Table 4, it should be noted that these means are in the order specified in the third hypothesis. Respondents who are high on level of object relations and low on developmental concerns have the highest marital adjustment scores (mean=120.6), followed by those who are high on both object relations and developmental concerns (mean=118.3), then by those who are low on both object relations and developmental concerns (mean=115.1), and finally by those who are low on object relations and high on developmental concerns (mean=108.1). Also as specified in Hypothesis

TABLE 3

Stepwise Multiple Regression of Total Dyadic Adjustment Score on Level of Object Relations, Developmental Concerns, and Their Interaction

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF REGRESSION

Source	*df*	SS	MS	F
Regression	3	4203.72	1401.24	14.05***
Residual	93	9272.94	99.71	

SUMMARY TABLE

STEP	VARIABLE(S) ENTERED	R	R^2	CHANGE R^2	BETA at final step	t at entry	t at final step
1	BORRTI				-.01	-2.55*	-0.05
	DCQ	.53	.28	.28	.21	-2.60*	0.79
2	INTERACTION	.56	.31	.03	-.74	-2.09*	-2.09*

* $p<.05$

*** $p<.001$

TABLE 4

Dyadic Adjustment by Level of Object Relations and Developmental Concerns

MEANS

LEVEL OF OBJECT RELATIONS	DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS: LOW (1-20)			HIGH (21-52)		
	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD
HIGH (0-12)	38	120.6	9.6	12	118.3	7.2
LOW (13-48)	14	115.1	11.1	33	108.1	11.8

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Level of Object Relations	411.01	1	411.01	3.78*
Developmental Concerns	1184.13	1	1184.13	10.90***
Interaction	578.46	1	578.46	5.33*
Error	10,100.47	93	108.61	

* $p<.05$

*** $p<.001$

III, the greatest difference between adjacent means was that between the low object relations/ low developmental concerns group and the low object relations/high developmental concerns group.

Not all the pairwise mean differences were significant as specified in the third hypothesis, however. Post hoc Scheffe contrasts indicated that the mean of respondents classified as low on object relations and high on developmental concerns (108.1) was significantly lower than the mean of respondents in any other group. However, none of the other groups differed significantly.

Clearly level of object relations does interact with developmental concerns in its effect on marital adjustment such that adjustment appears highest when object relations is high and developmental concerns are low; marital adjustment is clearly lowest level of object relations is low and developmental concerns are high.

Analysis Including Total Life Events

Table 5 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis in which life events, as assessed by combined past and recent FILE scores was substituted for developmental concerns. In this regression only the main effect of object relations was a significant predictor of marital adjustment/satisfaction. Neither the effect of total life events nor the interaction of object relations and life events was significant.

Table 6 presents the results of the two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of total marital adjustment by level of object relations and the total life events (FILE) score. As in the regression analysis, only the main effect due to level of object relations was significant; the interaction between level of object relations and total life events was not. Therefore, the interaction predicted in Hypothesis III was not significant when developmental transitions were considered in terms of actual life events, as opposed to developmental concerns.

TABLE 5

Stepwise Multiple Regression of Total Dyadic Adjustment on Level of Object Relations, Total Life Events (FILE) Score, and Their Interaction

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF REGRESSION

Source	df	SS	MS	F
Regression	3	3,737.84	1,245.95	11.92***
Residual	94	9,822.33	104.49	

SUMMARY TABLE

STEP	VARIABLE(S) ENTERED	R	R^2	CHANGE R^2	BETA	t at ENTRY	t at FINAL STEP
1	Object Relations				.04	-4.45***	0.28
	Life Events (FILE)	.50	.25	.25	-.14	-1.71	-0.73
2	Interaction	.52	.28	.03	-.43	-1.68	-1.68

*** p<.001

TABLE 6

Marital Adjustment by Level of Object Relations and Total Life Events (FILE) Scores

	TOTAL LIFE EVENTS (FILE)					
Level of Object Relations	LOW			HIGH		
	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD
HIGH	32	120.8	8.5	18	118.7	10.2
LOW	18	114.4	11.5	30	110.5	13.7

ANOVA SUMMARY TABLE

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Level of Object Relations	1,217.17	1	1,217.17	9.76**
Life Events	209.57	1	209.57	1.68
Interaction	20.28	1	20.28	0.16
Error	11,724.40	94	124.73	

** $p<.01$

Marital Adjustment and Demographic Variables

Since all the demographic variables were either interval scale variables or dichotomies, Pearson correlations were used to determine whether marital adjustment was related significantly to any of these factors, These correlations were in no case substantial in magnitude, but three of the correlations were significant.

There was a weak negative correlation between marital adjustment and years married ($r=-.22$, $p<.05$) and a weak negative correlation between number of children and marital adjustment ($r=-.17$, $p<.05$). Also, respondents whose husbands had been married before reported greater satisfaction than those whose husbands had not been previously married ($r=-.27$, $p<.01$).

Summary

The data confirmed the study's first hypothesis, finding generally moderate positive relationships between the object relations and marital satisfaction measures. The magnitudes of the observed correlations were quite similar for the groups with and without children.

The study's findings refuted the second hypothesis. There appears to be a weak negative relationship between level of developmental transitions and marital adjustment among those without children, while a moderate negative relationship exists between the level of developmental transition and marital adjustment among those with children.

Regarding the third hypothesis which concerned the interactive effect on marital adjustment of level of object relations and developmental transitions, there were mixed findings. The two measures of transition, the FILE and the DCQ, were considered separately. When the DCQ was taken as the measure of transition used in a multiple regression, the interactive effect of object relations and developmental concerns did explain slightly more of the variability in marital adjustment than the main effects alone. Similarly, the ANOVA of marital adjustment by level of object relations and developmental concerns yielded significant main effects for the level of object relations and developmental concerns, as well as a significant interaction effect.

In comparing cell means of marital adjustment scores, it was found that the means fell in the order specified. However, not all the pairwise differences were significant, as predicted. While the mean of respondents classified as low on object relations and high on developmental concerns was significantly lower than the mean of respondents in any other group, none of the other groups differed significantly.

When the FILE was taken as the measure of transition in the multiple regression, only the main effect of object relations was a significant predictor of marital adjustment/satisfaction. Neither the effect of total life events nor the interaction of object relations and life events was significant. Neither was any significant interaction obtained from the ANOVA. Only the main effect due to level of object relations was significant. Therefore, the interaction predicted in Hypothesis III was not significant when developmental transitions were considered in terms of actual life events tapped by the FILE.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Major Findings

While the previous chapter has presented the results of statistical analyses carried out to test the study's three major hypotheses, here the major findings relevant to those hypotheses, as well as the theoretical and clinical implications of those results will be considered. Additionally, material from the ten taped interviews with participants will be discussed in terms of themes which highlighted their relevance to these hypotheses.

Level of Object Relations and Marital Adjustment/Satisfaction

The moderate positive relationship found between level of object relations and degree of marital satisfaction confirms the work of those who have viewed marital functioning from an object relations perspective (Dicks, 1963; Zinner, 1976; Meissner, 1978; Berkowitz, 1984; Feldman, 1982, among others). Central to this view is the concept of projective identification, a process which shifts intrapsychic conflict into the interpersonal sphere. Thus, the study's findings bear out the notion that to the degree an individual is unable to contain unacceptable parts of the self, these parts will become split off, located in one's partner, and conflict then is experienced as residing in the relationship. The battle becomes externalized, the spouse felt to be the source of the problem, and the level of marital satisfaction necessarily declines.

This is illustrated by Susan, a 30 year old woman married seven years who rated her marriage as somewhat below the average. While she had been an analyst with the Transit Authority for a number of years, a job she had often felt less than pleased with, her husband had numerous career changes over the past several years and was, in her words, "not at all career oriented." This was something she perceived as a frequent source of tension between them. About his latest career shift she stated:

> I think it's the right thing for him, but I'm not sure he necessarily agrees and I can only push him so far obviously because if I push him too much he's only going to rebel anyway. I was very surprised by a couple of his career changes-- he just announced to me that this was what he wanted to do. The first time this happened I was rather taken aback. It sort of came out of left field one day.

Susan's own difficulties in making changes and her need for control got played out in the context of her relationship: thus, she often viewed her husband as impulsive or irresponsible and felt as if she alone was burdened with bearing the load of the marriage's less pleasant obligations. On another level, however, this struggle might be seen as an externalized version of her discomfort with her own risk-taking inclinations, or her own disowned wishes to be "irresponsible".

While on the healthy end of the spectrum of these projective defensive maneuvers suggested by Zinner (1976), a certain amount of projective identification can enhance the empathy one partner feels for another (and thus enhances satisfaction with the relationship), on the more pathological end of the spectrum marital functioning is disrupted. The marriage itself may be imbued with the perceived all-bad characteristics of one's partner and dissatisfaction is experienced.

Since the quality of one's object representations is a most pervasive condition which cannot but affect one's experience of the world, the degree to which these representations are benign or malignant must similarly color the marriage. While it may be feasible that for a time, the spouse may be experienced as the all-good, idealized figure against an overwhelmingly bad negative background, such a defensive stance is tenuous at best and it is difficult to conceive of how this kind of idealization could endure over time and life's stresses.

Similarly, while self-esteem may be precariously maintained by the merging with or mirroring by an omnipotent other, as Berkowitz (1985) observes, such a balance carries with it the expectation that one's partner be perfect and that attachment remain uninterrupted, conditions which once again, when disrupted, will be met with anger and disappointment at the now less than ideal spouse. Amy, a 32 year old mother of a one year old baby, talked about her reliance on her husband to make decisions:

> I sort of rely on him or try to elicit some response about what does he think if I do this or what does he think if I don't do something, to help me make decisions. Maybe I'm able to do it but I rely on him for the final say in things, to ask me questions, to get me out of it. I guess I'm a little disappointed if he's not doing the full job of it.

This is consistent with the observations of Meissner (1978), who speaks of the degree to which the self is differentiated and autonomous as affecting how developmental tasks are approached. The study's findings confirm the relationship between this level of differentiation and how satisfying the marriage is perceived to be.

In couples where there is a greater sense of internal resilience, blame may be more easily externalized onto the outside world for difficulties, rather than onto each other. This results in a greater feeling of cohesion between partners. Rachel, 35 years old and married for six years, observed:

> We went through a period of unemployment, which was pretty hard, and we went through not having two nickels to rub together when you first get married and they were happy periods because we were optimistic that things would get better. We felt that these things were very much a normal part of life. We felt in control and that it was just a matter of time before if would sort itself out because we were working on it, we were planning for it to get better so we didn't feel helpless or immobilized by it. We felt like nothing was wrong with us. If you didn't have a job it's not because you're incompetent or anything, it's because the economy changed, or you're just out of school and the first job you took was not the right one.

In such a couple it appears that there is considerably less of a need for projection, and thus less disappointment and ensuing rage. Difficulties are experienced as expectable and not insurmountable-- neither member of the couple is that easily overwhelmed by them. Neither is there such an overblown sense of idealization of one's partner that can be easily shattered. Less fragility and rigidity can allow a more enduring empathic grasp of the other's experience.

In short, the findings of this study confirm the validity of looking at the quality of internal object relations as an indicator of marital dysfunction: findings here are consistent with previous research pointing to such factors as narcissistic vulnerability and overemployment of projective primitive

defenses as resulting in stormy marital relationships marked by disappointment and anger.

Developmental Transitions and Marital Adjustment/Satisfaction

Developmental transitions were measured by the combined past and recent life event noted on the Family Inventory of Life Events (FILE), as well as by total scores on the researcher developed Developmental Concerns Questionnaire (DCQ).

Initially, it had been hypothesized that no relationship existed between these variables. This was not borne out by the data, which demonstrated a weak negative relationship among respondents without children and a moderate negative relationship among respondents with children. In other words, the accumulation of developmental changes was found to have a greater negative effect on women who were parents than on women who were not. Thus, it may be assumed that there is something intrinsic to having children which strengthens the disruptive impact of such developmental changes upon one's perception of marital satisfaction. Another interpretation of this finding may be that women with children already start out with a lower baseline satisfaction than their childless, peers, making the changes more unsettling as these women with children have experienced their marriages as more precarious to begin with.

The lowered rate of marital satisfaction among couples with children has already been documented in the literature by such authors as Rollins and Feldman (1970) and Olson (1983). These couples who have children find themselves at a different point in the family life cycle from those who are childless, and are faced with a host of developmental tasks particular to childrearing which may set them apart in some very basic way from the childless group. Because the transition to parenthood itself represents a significant stress, such couples may find themselves at a lower threshold to handle additional stressors that crop up, thus negatively impacting the perception of their marital relationships.

Such an explanation is consonant with the work of Lavee, McCubbin and Olson (1987), who looked at the accumulation of both normative and nonnormative stressors on families, finding that with a new strain

introduced to the family, prior strains become worsened. These strains, in turn, decrease the family's sense of well-being. Laura, a 31 year old chemical engineer, married for five years with one 18 month old observed:

> I think our life has been extraordinarily stressful. We've had a lot of changes ever since we got married. We've never really lived in a period where we haven't had changes either upcoming or anticipated. It's hard for us to understand sometimes what normal would be. So if you ask me in three years where would I like to be, I'd like to be in a situation where I have a much calmer home, that we've lived here for a number of years, that I have a certain number of clients I feel successful with--striking a balance that I haven't been able to yet.

The data confirm the inherently disruptive (and therefore stressful) nature of developmental shifts-- stressful insofar as they have the power to color marital perceptions or to destabilize them. This is consistent with the findings of Pearlin (1980), who has observed the relationship between life strains and psychological distress among adults and concluded that the two are inextricably tied. Olson, et al. (1983) also observe that transitional periods which affect the family as a whole have a very similar flavor to those affecting the individual: such times are punctuated by feelings of loss, anxiety, and uncertainty. Conflicts within the family unit become more difficult to resolve during such times.

Indeed, if changes are of such a pervasive nature that they cause a woman to question the value and direction of her life, why should her marriage be exempt from such a sweeping examination? Such changes, whether they have already reached the point where concrete action has been taken or whether they still remain in a purely conceptual stage, cannot help but engender anxiety and most people cannot sufficiently compartmentalize stress and anxiety in one realm of their lives so that it does not spill into another.

Of course, the causal nature of the relationship must remain speculative: it is not entirely clear whether such developmental shifts prompt women to feel less satisfied with their partners or, conversely, whether women who are already dissatisfied with their marriages feel the resultant need to carry out changes in other areas of their lives.

In any case, it appears that whatever instability accompanies the changes, whether they are carefully planned and desired, or of a more catastrophic and unpredictable nature, there is a destabilizing and ultimately negative impact upon marital satisfaction. It is interesting, however, to speculate upon the possibility that planned and desired changes may bring have different nuances and implications than those over which people have no control. For instance, Bonnie, a 27 year old graphic designer who had been married two years, spoke about her plans for a job change and for starting a family in the immediate future. Her husband was also job hunting at the same time:

> There's a lot of things happening all together at once, but that's always the way it seems to be for us. This is a calm year. When we first got married my husband's mother was very ill and she died a year after. That whole year the trauma was definitely dealing with his mother's illness and then her death. Now it's much different because these new changes are things we've thought about and wanted to do and now it feels like it's our time to do them whereas the first years it felt like it wasn't really our time, it was time devoted to other people, other things, circumstances.

These observations suggest that planned changes (starting a family, changing a job) bring with them a qualitatively different feeling state than do the unplanned events (the death of her husband's mother). Rossi (1980) addresses this distinction in understanding stress as resulting primarily from the asychrony of events-- that is, from the unanticipated which is then experienced as a traumatic event.

There was a somewhat stronger trend for marital satisfaction to be more strongly negatively correlated with higher scores on the researcher developed Developmental Concerns Questionnaire (DCQ) than on the Family Inventory of Life Events (FILE). This finding no doubt reflects the different domains tapped by the two instruments. The items on the DCQ appear reflective of more internal upsets and dissatisfactions which may be harder to view as exclusively or uniquely developmental in nature and are certainly less connected to discrete events than the FILE items.

One possible interpretation of this finding is that high scorers on the DCQ and the FILE may find themselves in very different places vis-a-vis the developmental process: while an elevated score on the FILE indicates a large

number of events which have already occurred within the family unit, a high scorer on the DCQ may be experiencing a sense of upheaval or shifting of priorities such that she may still be at the stage of merely contemplating the execution of changes. Thus, it may be that high scorers on the DCQ are located more at the beginning stages of the process of carrying out change, while high FILE scorers have already experienced the change itself insofar as it may be a discrete, measurable event. This was confirmed by interviews with subjects, in which there was the suggestion that, from an experiential point of view, the still tentative contemplation of a change feels very different (and perhaps more disturbing) than carrying out a decision that has already been thoroughly weighed. Bonnie, mentioned above, alluded to this in her discussion of the decision to try to have a baby:

> For us the most nervous part was deciding whether or not to do it. Now that I think we've finally relaxed and said, okay, let's do it, it's almost like the next day you feel a little better-- the decision's been made.

Because the thrust for developmental changes that will ultimately cause visible alterations in an individual's life structure undoubtedly begins as a reconsideration of priorities or a sense of dissatisfaction with current life circumstances, those who are still in the contemplative stages of this spectrum could conceivable score in the lower ranges of the FILE, and yet still experience themselves as very much in the throes of a developmental tailspin.

The results suggest, then, that those women who were actively questioning the current structures of their lives, although actual changes may not yet have been instituted or carried out, may be subjected to higher levels of stress which then spill over in to the domain of the marriage, affecting it in a negative direction. Perhaps by the time the events have actually occurred (so that they can then be picked up by the FILE) there has been a greater adjustment to the changes, as whatever shifts have taken place have undergone some integration into the couple's relationship allowing the equilibrium to be regained. The bulk of the individual's internal struggle may already be largely resolved by this point.

Moreover, the possibility exists that the DCQ may really be picking up a more global variety of dissatisfaction (perhaps that which is not uniquely

related to developmental issues), and so these same women who score in the higher ranges are more likely to perceive their marriages as unsatisfactory in some way. There also appears to be some overlap between characteristics accompanying developmental shifts (a questioning of oneself, a sense of upheaval) and depressive features-- thus, the two are not easily teased apart, and it is very possible that the women who scored the highest on the DCQ were also those who were experiencing some degree of depression, again coloring their perceptions of their relationships.

The Interactive Effect on Marital Adjustment of Level of Object Relations and Developmental Transitions

The two measures of developmental transition (the Developmental Concerns Questionnaire and the Family Inventory of Life Events) were considered separately since there was little correlation between them, each measure yielding differing results. Interestingly, and perhaps in keeping with the above analysis of correlations between marital satisfaction and these same two developmental measures, a significant interactional effect was found only between level of object relations and the DCQ, while none was found between level of object relations and the FILE. In the latter, only object relations was found to be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. This was borne out consistently in both statistical analyses. Once again, this suggests the very different domains tapped by the two instruments which reflect contrasting aspects of the developmental process (or, perhaps, differing points along a developmental continuum).

What these findings do seem to confirm is the validity of looking at transitions occurring in adult life in tandem with the quality of object representations, since it is such a combination that will yield significant information about how those changes are negotiated and the impact they may have on other spheres of a couple's life. The findings suggest that such an examination is valid when the developmental transitions under scrutiny are those of a more internal nature, generated by a more individual sense of needing to reorder priorities, as contrasted to external events which may impinge upon a person's life. The quality of one's internal world will play a significant role in how the just how such changes are experienced and in how disruptive and far sweeping the ripples from these shifts are.

This suggests that the now-cliche of the "mid-life crisis" which has inundated the media and popular literature over the past decade or so may be merely reflective of only one segment of the population that undergoes these changes in the most abrupt and dramatic fashion. Others may experience such "crises" as well, only in a modified form: that is to say, the latter group may consist of individuals who, perhaps at the higher end of the object relational spectrum, have relied on fewer primitive splitting mechanisms to cope with the world, so that the current life structure doesn't need to be overhauled quite so radically, leaving a dramatic emotional storm in its wake. It may be that for these people, transitions occur and are carried out in a smoother manner so that the changes appear quite continuous, both from the internal experience of the subject and to the outside observer. Such continuity and lack of dramatic breaks between one phase and the next confirms some recent work on women's developmental courses (Taylor, 1981a, 1981b), observing that women tend to negotiate changes in a more gradual manner than men. Margo, a 31 year old attorney with a six month old baby echoed this theme:

> We've been married for nearly seven years and we lived together before for three years. Getting married was just an incredibly natural progression-- it felt like more of a decision to have a party than to make a significant substantial change in your life and the way you look at your relationship. Certainly it came from the two of us, but it's been very much evolutionary.

Similarly, when asked how she understood changes she has perceived in herself over the past several years, she replied, "Just experience in seeing the world... there's not been any sort of epiphany kind of thing."

That interactions were found between level of object relations and perception of marital satisfaction when considering the DCQ as a measure of transition (as opposed to the FILE) again strongly suggests that the mere presence or absence of a discrete event may not be a valid indicator of a more overriding state of developmental flux.

The data suggest that the quality of one's object representations does indeed present a legitimate and informative perspective from which to view the nature of developmental changes and their effect on marital perception. Respondents who were high on level of object relations and low on

developmental concerns had the highest marital satisfaction scores, followed by those who were high on on both level of object relations and developmental concerns, then by those who were low on both developmental concerns and level of object relations, and then finally by those who were low on object relations and high on developmental concerns.

As previously mentioned, the greatest difference between adjacent means of marital satisfaction scores was that between the low object relations/ low developmental concerns group and the low object relations/ high developmental concerns group (the only significant difference found). This confirms the notion that an object relations perspective is a meaningful context from which to consider the effects of developmental shifts when they occur in tandem with a those of a partner. It seems that the more highly object related women here were less likely to see these changes as pervasively disruptive and were better equipped to deal effectively with the stress the changes generated. The unique combinations of object relatedness and level of developmental upheaval presented by each couple determined just how the impact of the changes were felt. Thus, although there will certainly be a number of common features which occur, it becomes relatively meaningless to talk about any one given change (a career shift, or the birth of a first child, for instance) and its impact on the marital relationship without also carefully considering that uniqueness of each person's object world, since this influences how the change is defined.

Moreover, whether both partners share a similar style in negotiating and carrying out changes or whether they differ significantly also affects the couple. Two people who tend to carefully plan every move, keeping each other informed of every new development every step of the way throughout the entire process of executing a change would seem to have a very different experience from a couple in which one partner presents this deliberate style but the other launches into action impulsively, or, perhaps ruminates very privately so that when the change becomes a concrete reality for the spouse, it may be felt as a sudden and foreign occurrence in which there has been no shared participation. Maggie, a 28 year old career counselor who has been married for two years illustrated this point as she discussed her husband's possible plan for them to move to Seattle:

> We're quite different in our decision making styles-- that's one of our big conflicts. He's sort of impulsive, he'll just fall into things. He'll make what I label all the wrong decisions. He just doesn't think ahead. I guess I'm judgmental of him and I think he doesn't make decisions very effectively and I laugh at him when he's doing this. About moving it's tough because I've been keeping a lot of my thoughts about that to myself and I think deep down inside that he's going off a little half-cocked on this-- like he doesn't have it all strategized before and before I start going off across the country I have to have a strategy. So I'm just sitting and watching and not giving him any help or support and I'm counting on his inability to decide to keep us in New York for as long as possible.

This can be contrasted to a couple with a greater similarity in decision making styles. Margo, mentioned previously, and her husband were also contemplating a major move (to San Francisco, in this case). She spoke about how they had been struggling with the decision:

> Over the past several weeks in thinking about going out to San Francisco we've been at different points but I think we try to be pretty sensitive about what the other person is feeling, especially with this major stuff. On these major things I guess both of us feel that our status quo is so okay that there's nothing wrong with giving the other person a chance if they're not ready to make a change. With the decision about moving, we both realize that you fluctuate with your feelings and so we don't take either person's feelings at the moment as final feelings-- you have to see if it stabilizes at any point. I think that we're alike in this way makes it smooth-- it's just not an area of friction.

Though both couples are faced with seemingly identical situations, they are played out very differently. While the second couple's approach is tempered by an empathy which recognizes the inherent difficulties in making such a major move, the first couple finds themselves in a much more adversarial and critical position. It is interesting to speculate that perhaps in the first couple defensive operations are more polarized so that each member sustains an overly rigid view of the other-- in this case, the wife as the competent planner and the husband as the one who makes decisions rashly and fails to adequately anticipate their consequences.

Marital Adjustment and Demographic Variables

Of the three significant effects found between demographic characteristics and the marital adjustment measure, none was very surprising and each confirmed findings in the existing literature.

The weak negative relationship between marital satisfaction and number of years married has been documented on numerous occasions elsewhere (Burr, 1970; Rollins and Feldman, 1970; Olson, et al.,1983; among others) and was confirmed here. This relationship has typically been described as a shallow U-shaped curve. Many studies have linked this to the family life cycle in terms of the ages and stages of the couple's children and the effect that these particular stresses bring to the marriage.

Similarly, that a weak negative relationship was also found between number of children and marital satisfaction was not surprising. As Olson, et al. (1983) point out, "Satisfied families are not stressed families, and families under stress are, indeed, dissatisfied."(p.185) and a greater number of children undoubtedly brings along with it greater amounts of stress. This would seem to be invariably more so for women, since they typically have borne the brunt of greater responsibilities of juggling both household and their own professional obligations which must necessarily become more complicated and demanding as the size of the family grows.

Finally, the finding that women whose husbands had previously been married reported a greater level of satisfaction than those of men for whom this was a first marriage presents the possibility that remarried men either have a greater motivation to make things work well this time around or that their wives perceive it to be so. Perhaps these men, with the benefit of previous experience, now come to their second marriages with a deeper understanding of themselves and what is needed to make the relationship more satisfactory. However, because such men represented such a small percentage of the entire sample (8%), it is difficult to make broad generalizations about the significance of this finding.

Limitations

The findings of the study are not without their limitations, and in this section, aspects of the study's design and measures will be discussed, as well as sample characteristics which have implications for the study's generalizability.

The major methodological flaw of the study is its exclusion of the direct examination of the husbands. This limits the scope of the research significantly as it restricts the focus to the women and their subjective perceptions of their husbands, or leaves their husbands out of the picture altogether. Thus, there is no way of knowing the particular level of object relations for any given husband and how well it might match or differ from his wife's. Neither is there a sense of his own state of developmental flux, nor any of the specific issues with which he might be grappling. This renders an incomplete view of the couple's interaction and only leaves one to imagine the psychological makeup of the husband. Further, there is no way of telling whether a husband's level of marital satisfaction matches that of his wife's, or whether there is a significant discrepancy.

Another difficulty is the inconsistency of the perspective of the measures. While three of the four measures ask the woman herself questions pertaining to her own perceptions of her individual developmental issues, object representations, or marital satisfaction, one (the FILE) has a much broader focus and asks the question, "Did the change happen in your family?" For any of the items to which a participant may have checked "yes", there is no way of knowing whether this change was specifically related to her own life or to her husband's. This blurs the distinction between certain events which may have affected a woman directly (losing or quitting her job, for instance) and those which she mav have experienced vis-a-vis her husband (his losing or quitting his job). The differentiation between the direct and indirect effects of undergoing these events is lost and consequently there is no way to talk about how the impact of either event may be felt.

As well as the inconsistency in focus mentioned above pertaining to the FILE which has implications for the integrity of the methodology of the study as a whole, the this measure presents other difficulties in its attempts to measure life events. While it makes a valiant effort to be exhaustive in its scope of 71 items, one glaring disadvantage is its scoring system. In assigning

one point for every item to which has occurred, either in the past twelve months or before, this measure glosses over the grossly varying implications of the differing events. For example, one questions the validity of a measure that assigns the same point value for purchasing a car as it does for the death of a spouse. Clearly, this scale misses many of the not-so-fine nuances of the myriad of events which may affect a couple.

Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale may well have presented an opportunity for participants to idealize their marriages and deny difficulties in its assignment of higher scores for women who rated their marriages "perfect" and stated, "I want desperately for my relationship to succeed and would go to almost any length to see that it does." Thus, it is possible that this measure contributed to a halo effect as respondents portrayed themselves and their relationships in an overly positive light.

Additional questions arise in regard to the researcher developed Developmental Concerns Questionnnaire. While initially constructed with five items interspersed from the Beck Depression Inventory in efforts to screen out participants who may have been clinically depressed, this feature proved ultimately unuseful and impossible to interpret. In retrospect, it would have been far more efficacious to administer the Beck scale in its entirety along with the other measures. Thus, the question remains as to what degree the DCQ picked up depressive features.

Finally, there are a number of questions which arise pertaining to the sample characteristics of the study. As with any self-selected sample, there is always the question of how representative it is of the much larger pool originally contacted who chose not to participate. The possibility exists that the women with significantly more problematic marriages, or those whose object relatedness was much more tenuous and in the more clinically pathological range did not respond, perhaps because of the anxiety that such personal and self-revealing measures evoked. This may have been additionally true for women solicited who were undergoing severe marital difficulties at the time: answering extensive questions about the nature of their marriages might have only served to heighten their discomfort while providing no support for their raised anxieties, thus providing a rather poor incentive for response. The women who ultimately completed and returned the questionnaires, then, may represent a higher level of adjustment on both these dimensions than those who did not respond.

Moreover, since the sample was overwhelmingly white, upper middle class, and educated, the extent to which the findings can be generalized to a less affluent, less educated non-white population is unclear.

A last sampling consideration has to do with the very uneven sizes of the groups with children (N=65) and without children (N=33), making the two groups more difficult to compare with great statistical assurance. While this imbalance was taken into account in the interpretation of the results, a more even match would have been preferable.

Implications

The results of the study point to a complex web of overlapping and interconnecting forces in which the adult developmental course, the quality of one's representational world and marital relationship are all intertwined. The study suggests that to attempt to disentangle these factors would not only prove extremely difficult, but is also highly counterproductive since it is just such reciprocal influences which present a valid context from which to examine the nature of adult development as well as the progression of marital relationships.

This has important theoretical implications insofar as previous research has tended to classify adult development and marital adjustment as very separate domains, thus overlooking the fact that for the overwhelming majority of adults, such developmental flux is negotiated against the backdrop of one's partner's transitions. This necessarily affects the quality and character of the marriage. Particularly as women have become more active professionally and see this as a significant part of their identity, the intersecting (and often conflictual) paths of career and family have become integral in both men's and women's development. The notion of women's development being solely or even predominantly determined by the ages and stages of their children becomes dated and incomplete as the dimensions of couples' lives have become broader and more complex. Similarly, it may no longer be valid to speak of Levinson's notion of the "special woman" who helps her husband realize his dream as she develops increasingly ambitious dreams of her own.

With respect to clinical implications, the findings also suggest a more holistic approach to patients who may present with marital difficulties, as

these can be prompted or exacerbated by developmental pressures that either partner may be experiencing at a given time, particularly when the spouse has a divergent time table for the change. Thus, such conflicts ought to be examined neither wholly from the perspective of intrapsychic weakness on the part of one or both partners, nor from an exclusively systems oriented viewpoint. Rather, there ought to be a comprehensive understanding of the impact of ongoing developmental changes upon the marital relationship, and of the unique template of object constellations each partner brings to the marriage.

This perspective may ultimately have a rather depathologizing effect if clinicians are prone to looking at developmental pulls as a catalyst marital conflict rather than the couple's intrapsychic deficits. It is a perspective which casts a more normative light upon the marital difficulties which a couple can experience and suggests a certain predictability to these stressors as they are understood as part and parcel of the couple's individual and joint developmental course.

Lastly, regarding future research in both the fields of adult development and marital relationships, a more comprehensive view of the interactive nature of these variables ought to be taken into account. The integration of these two domains is glaringly absent as researchers have tended to keep the two distinct and failed to recognize how inextricably intertwined they are. To aid in this end, better empirical measures must be developed. This is particularly true regarding the need for and valid and reliable comprehensive measure of developmental flux which takes into account not only tangible events, but also the more internal, phenomenological processes that precede and accompany changes.

It was beyond the scope of this study to investigate how the developmental experiences of both men and women impact upon their marital adjustment. However, such research is needed if a thorough picture is to emerge, to further clarify how men and women may contrast with respect to the developmentally motivated issues they bring to their marriages and to how these may be differently experienced within their relationships.

Conclusions

In all, the study confirms the validity of examining adult developmental shifts in the context of the couple's relationship. Despite a quickly growing literature on the nature of these developmental presses which occur in adulthood, the subject has tended to be explored either wholly on the individual level, or pertaining to stages of the whole family. This study makes a valuable contribution in its unique focus upon the overlap between individual and the unit of the couple.

Previous findings by other researchers in the field have also been confirmed. The positive relationship found here between level of object relations and marital functioning is consistent with a number of previous authors (Zinner, 1976; Seagraves, 1982; Berkowitz, 1984; Goethals, Steele, and Broude, 1976; Feldman, 1982). Results here also point to the inherently stressful nature of the changes which adults can expect to undergo (Lavee, McCubbin, and Olson, 1987; Olson, et al., 1982; Hoffman, 1980).

Finally, the study's findings suggest the importance of understanding adult experience as far from static and should encourage future research to further tease apart the varied, complex aspects of the adult developmental process. This is a process which needs to be examined not only in terms of discrete, measurable milestones which are readily apparent to the outside observer, but also from a more internal and phenomenological perspective which may well reveal that developmental change is brewing long before any external event is discernible.

APPENDIX A

Recruitment Letters

Informed Consent Form

THE CITY COLLEGE
OF
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10031
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CENTER
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY (212) 690-6602, 3, 4

January 10,1989

Dear

My name is Janet Greenfield and I am a fellow synagogue member. I am a Ph.D. candidate in Clinical Psychology at City College currently working on my dissertation which is a study of developmental transitions which occur in adulthood and how these affect women's perceptions of their marital relationships. I'm writing to you at this time to ask for your participation in my research towards the completion of my doctorate.

If you are married and between the ages of 27-35 you can participate by completing the enclosed questionnaires. The study consists of a demographic face sheet and four questionnaires, all of which should take no longer than 45 minutes to one hour to fill out. I think you'll find that the questions are interesting and timely in addressing issues we face today.

I'd like to assure you that all the information you provide will remain completely confidential. Your name will not be used nor will you be identified as a participant. The study has been approved by the faculty at City College after carefully reviewing the research proposal and Rabbi Cantor has given me permission to ask your participation.

If you are interested, please complete the enclosed material and send it back to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope I have provided. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call me at 718-522-3275.

Thank you so much for your time and help in the completion of this important project.

Very truly yours,

Janet Greenfield

THE CITY COLLEGE
OF
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10031
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CENTER
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
(212) 690-6602, 3, 4

February 6,1989

Dear

I'm writing to you at this time to ask for your participation in a study of adult life. This research is part of my doctoral dissertation in Clinical Psychology at City College.

The study examines developmental transitions which occur in adulthood and how these affect women's perceptions of their marital relationship. If you are married and between the ages of 27-35 you can participate by completing the enclosed questionnaires. The study consists of a demographic face sheet and four questionnaires, all of which should take no longer than 45 minutes to one hour to fill out. I think you'll find that the questions are interesting and timely in addressing issues we face today.

The study has been approved by the faculty at City College after carefully reviewing the research proposal. I'd like to assure you that all the information you provide will remain completely confidential. Your name will not be used nor will you be identified as a participant. I am the only one who will have access to the information and all the material will be kept in the strictest confidence.

If you are interested, please complete the enclosed material and send it back to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope I have provided. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call me at 718-522-3275.

Thank you so much for your time and help in the completion of this important project.

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(212) 690-6602, 3, 4

February 6,1989

Dear

My name is Janet Greenfield and I am a fellow Cornellian. I've obtained you name from the Class of '79 Alumni Directory. I am a Ph.D. candidate in Clinical Psychology at City College currently working on my dissertation which is a study of developmental transitions which occur in adulthood and how these affect women's perceptions of their marital relationships. I'm writing to you at this time to ask for your participation in my research towards the completion of my doctorate.

If you are married and between the ages of 27-35 you can participate by completing the enclosed questionnaires. The study consists of a demographic face sheet and four questionnaires, all of which should take no longer than 45 minutes to one hour to fill out. I think you'll find that the questions are interesting and timely in addressing issues we face today.

I'd like to assure you that all the information you provide will remain completely confidential. Your name will not be used nor will you be identified as a participant. The study has been approved by the faculty at City College after carefully reviewing the research proposal .

If you are interested, please complete the enclosed material and send it back to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope I have provided. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call me at 718-522-3275.

Thank you so much for your time and help in the completion of this important project.

Very truly yours,

Janet Greenfield

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, have read the enclosed letter and understand that I will be given 5 tasks that will take approximately forty-five minutes to one hour to complete. I understand that my responses will be kept in strict confidence and that all identifying information will be removed. I am free to withdraw participation from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Signed _____

Dated _____

Are you willing to be interviewed at a later date by Ms. Greenfield on developmental issues facing women? _____ yes _____ no
If you answered yes, please indicate a phone number where you can be reached to arrange the interview. _____

Are you interested in receiving a summary of the results at the completion of the study? _____ yes _____ no

APPENDIX B

Measures

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Your age: _____

2. Husband's age: _____

3. Number of years married: _____

4. Have you been previously married?: _____
   If yes, age at first marriage: _____
   Number of years married: _____

5. Has your husband been previously married?
   If yes, age at first marriage: _____
   Number of years married: _____

6. Do you have children?: _____ Ages: _____

7. Your education (highest degree awarded): _____

8. Husband's education (highest degree awarded): _____

9. Your occupation: _____

10. Husband's occupation: _____

11. Your ethnic background: _____

12. Husband's ethnic background: _____

11. Your religious affiliation: _____

13. How would you rate your degree of observance (circle one):

Extremely observant					Not at all observant
5	4	3	2	1	0

14. Your husband's religious affiliation: _____

15. How would you rate his degree of observance (circle one):

Extremely observant					Not at all observant
5	4	3	2	1	0

DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS QUESTIONNAIRE

Throughout the life course, adults may find that they become concerned with the choices that they have made in the past and the decisions that face them in the future. Please indicate the extent to which each statement describes your own current experience by blackening the appropriate circle. Please respond to every statement.

	VERY MUCH	MODERATELY SO	SOME-WHAT	NOT AT ALL
1. I am preoccupied with making major changes in my life.	0	0	0	0
2. I am dissatisfied with one or more aspects of my life in a way that makes me feel pressured to make a change.	0	0	0	0
3. I wonder about the meaning of my life and what I am doing with it.	0	0	0	0
4. Though I consider making changes in my life, I feel immobilized & unable to do so.	0	0	0	0
5. I am sad all the time & I can't stand it.	0	0	0	0
6. I wonder about my abilities to get what I really want out of life.	0	0	0	0
7. I am preoccupied with recent or anticipated changes in my life as much as I try not to be.	0	0	0	0
8. I feel like I'm on a different time table than others.	0	0	0	0
9. The expectations others have for someone my age make me feel pressured to make changes.	0	0	0	0
10. As I look back on my life, all I can see is a lot of failures.	0	0	0	0
11. My life is not turning out the way I had planned it.	0	0	0	0
12. I always thought that by the time I reached my current age I would have achieved more.	0	0	0	0
13. The choices I make now seem more permanent than they used to.	0	0	0	0
14. Circumstances in my life often make it difficult for me to reach my goals.	0	0	0	0

	VERY MUCH	MODERATELY SO	SOME-WHAT	NOT AT ALL
15. I don't get real satisfaction out of anything anymore.	0	0	0	0
16. I think about whether I've accomplished as much as others my age.	0	0	0	0
17. I no longer think the same things in my life are important as I did 5 years ago.	0	0	0	0
18. I wonder about steps I might take to make my life more fulfilling	0	0	0	0
19. I am surprised that my life up to this point has taken the shape it has.	0	0	0	0
20. I've lost my interest in other people.	0	0	0	0
21. The mistakes I might make now have more serious implications than they did 5 years ago.	0	0	0	0
22. It is becoming important to focus my energies upon aspects of my life that I've previously neglected.	0	0	0	0
23. I feel more self-confident than I did 5 years ago.	0	0	0	0
24. I feel I must reorder my priorities.	0	0	0	0
25. I have to push myself very hard to do anything.	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1.) What changes (if any) have you recently made/anticipate making in your life?

What has prompted these changes? To what do you attribute them?

What effect have they had/do you anticipate they'll have on your relationship with your husband?

2.) Similarly-- recent/anticipated changes for your husband?

What prompted those changes?

What effect have they had on your relationship?

3.) Have you felt you've played an active role in initiating & carrying out these shifts in your life or do you feel they've mostly been imposed on you?

Do you generally plan for these changes, or does it seem as if they just suddenly happen to you?

Are you and your husband similar in this regard?

What effect does your similarity/difference is style of making changes have on your relationship?

4.) When major changes or shifts have occurred in your life, what has been your reaction to them?

How has your husband reacted to them?

How have the two of you coped with/adjusted to these changes?

5.) What do you consider your priorities at this point?

Have they changed over the past 5 years? How?

What do you think your husband's priorities are?

How have they changed over the past 5 years?

6.) Do you generally feel in tune/synchronous with your spouse regarding your goals and priorities?

What happens when you're not?

How (if at all) do you feel you've changed over the past 5 years?

To what do you attribute these changes?

Has your husband changed? How?

How have these changes affected the relationship?

8.) What role does your husband play in your formulating and carrying out your own goals and ambitions?

Do you ever subordinate your own interests and pursuits to his?

Does he ever subordinate his interests and pursuits to yours?

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